GIRLS OF MOUNT MORRIS

AMANDA·M DOUGLAS

To Peggy

from

Muriel Landells.

Dec. 17. 1932.

LILIAN BOYD GLANCED AROUND THE STATION WITH A KIND OF JOYOUS SURPRISE AND WONDER

(Chap. 2. Girls at Mt. Morris)

THE GIRLS AT MOUNT MORRIS

BY

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The Girls at Mt. Morris

CHAPTER I

LOOKING THE FUTURE IN THE FACE

Lilian Boyd entered the small, rather shabby room, neat, though everything was well worn. Her mother sat by a little work table busy with some muslin sewing and she looked up with a weary smile. Lilian laid a five-dollar bill on the table.

"Madame Lupton sails on Saturday," she said. "Oh how splendid it must be to go to Paris! Mrs. Cairns is to finish up; there is only a little to do, but Madame said everything you did was so neat, so well finished that she should be very glad to have you by the first of October."

The mother sighed. "Meanwhile there is almost two months to provide for, and I had to break in the last hundred dollars to pay the rent. Oh Lilian! I hardly know which way to turn. I am not strong any more, I have made every effort to—" and her voice broke, "but I am afraid you will have to give up school."

She buried her face in her hands and sobbed.

"Oh, mother, don't! don't!" the girl implored. "I suppose it was selfish of me to think of such a thing and you couldn't go through two years more. You are not as well as you were a year ago. I'll see Sally Meeks tonight and take the place in the factory. I only have to give two weeks and then begin on five dollars a week. It will be better than the sewing."

Lilian Boyd stood up very straight and determined, though her heart sank within her. To give up her cherished wish, to join the great army of shop girls with no hope of advancement in the future! She was almost sixteen; she had been two years in the High School and was a favorite scholar. Two years more and she could teach. It was in the walk of life that she so ardently desired. Tall for her age, vigorous, with courage and earnestness in every line of the face that was fine, now, to the casual observer and might develop into beauty. It was spirited, eager, with a clear complexion, deep blue eyes that in some moods seemed black, while the hair was light and abundant. The brows and lashes were much darker. The features were regular, the chin broad and cleft, but it was the courage and uplift in the face that gave it character.

The mother was so different. It was not

altogether a weak face but intensely commonplace; the sort of woman who has no ambitions beyond the ordinary round of life. Was it the old story of the eagle in the dove's nest?

"You are very tired," she began, presently. "Lie down on the lounge while I get supper."

Mrs. Boyd was still crying softly. Lilian kissed her, threw a light shawl over her shoulders, then lighted the gas burner and set on the kettle. She would run out and get a chop for her mother, some for breakfast as well. Yes, she must begin to be the care taker, she had been so engrossed with her studies and giving her help with the sewing they did for a dressmaking establishment that she had hardly noted. She swallowed over a great lump in her throat, it was a bitter sacrifice and yet she *must* make it. She could not even study during the evenings for she must help with the sewing, and if her mother should be ill!

The little supper was tastily arranged, the tea and the chop had an unwonted fragrance.

"I'm awfully sorry," said the mother, "but Sally says it is a nice shop and the boss is particular about the kind of girls he has, and to think Sally's earning nine dollars a week now!"

"Yes, Sally's a nice pleasant girl," that was

all she could trust her voice to say.

"And it will be company back and forth. Maybe—sometime—"

Oh, had she been right in that long ago time? It seemed ages to her, so much had happened since, and she thought she could not live without the child, but after all the girl was not of her kind. What if she had done her a great wrong! She had never been an introspective woman, her life was mostly on the surface, with commonplace aims and desires.

The kitchen was small, the middle room not much larger, but it had two nice windows, the front was on a much neglected street with a big carpenter's shop across the way. They used that for a sleeping room and it had in it the remnant of better days. The sewing room was much more quiet.

Lilian cleared away the things. Mrs. Boyd went back to the lounge. Then the girl went down the street. She had best make her sacrifice at once, it was not a subject to ponder over and she realized it had been a big black cloud hanging about her the last month.

Sally's mother sat out on the small porch gossiping with a neighbor.

"Oh, Lily Boyd," she exclaimed. "Sally

was coming up on Saturday but she had to fly round like a bee in a flower garden. It want her turn to go to the Rest House, but the other girl couldn't—sickness at home. So Sally went in her place. Splendid, isn't it! And board only two dollars a week. I tell Sally she's got the nicest boss we've ever heard about. She'll be home Sat'day night and tell you all about it."

"Yes, I want to see her. No, I can't stay. Oh, mother does not seem very well. Good-night."

Lilian did not go straight home. This was the old part of the town there were no real cottages and little gardens fragrant with flowers, but people were huddled in them. There would presently be factories and tenement houses.

She was making a sharp, desperate fight. Strong natures have to. Why was she born with these ambitions and aims and capabilities and the ardent desire to do something? All girls did not have them. Some in the class laughed and made merry without a thought of the future. Some expected to teach and 'just hated it.' She would have been so glad. Well the dream must be given up—at least for years.

It would be horrible to count on her mother's death for freedom. She shuddered.

They went to bed, but neither of them slept until after midnight. Now and then Lilian heard a soft sob. She felt that she ought to comfort her mother, but what could she say? Since she had been growing up she had become aware of a barrier between them. Mrs. Boyd had loved her fervently as a little girl, she had not taken any special pride in her entering the High School with such a fine record. She was in no sense an ambitious or an intellectual woman and the girl's vigor and intentness sometimes frightened her. She should have been in some other sphere.

Lilian sank into a sort of dull apathy, questioning everything as youth often does under a great disappointment. What was the use of living if one could never attain the things one desired? She was not like Sally nor dozens of other girls. Their commonplace lives would be martyrdom to her.

So they both slept late. Lilian prepared the simple breakfast.

"Perhaps it would be a good thing to get out last winter's clothes and see what can be fixed over," said the mother. "But you have grown so much this year, Lilian."

Oh, if clothes mattered, if anything mattered! There was the postman's whistle.

Quite a thick letter for her mother in a neat lady's hand.

"Why that's funny," and a smile brightened the girl's face.

Mrs. Boyd glanced it over. Why it's from Mrs. Searing. She was here last March, you know. She has always taken such an interest in you, and—oh read it, read it aloud. My head is so bad this morning."

She began to cry again.

Helen took the letter. The first page was full of friendly interest and then she branched off into a delightful visit she had been making at a very pretty place, one of the old fashioned aristocratic towns where a relative kept a select and high class Seminary for young ladies. She had found her in something of a quandry. The woman who had taken charge of the bed and table line and a sort of general seamstress had suddenly married, and it was necessary to fill her place before school opened. She wanted a middle aged person with some experience who was neat and careful. She would have a pleasant room and the duties would not be arduous. There was a housekeeper and several maids beside the cook.

"So," wrote Mrs. Searing, "I told her about Lilian, remembering you had said you were afraid you could not keep her in school to finish, and her ambition to be a teacher. She was wonderfully interested and I told her somewhat of your misfortunes and struggles. So she proposes that you shall accept this position and that Lilian shall take a sort of supervision of some of the younger pupils and go on with her own education. Mrs. Barrington has been very kind and helpful to several young girls and I know Lilian will admire her extremely."

The girl sprang up with a glad cry and flung her arms around her mother's neck.

"Oh, let us go, let us go! Why it seems like a miracle," and then she was crying, too, from an overwrought heart.

Presently she resumed the letter. They would have a pleasant room together, considerable leisure, and there would be music, a fine library beside that in the town and the society was charming. The mother's salary was a very fair one and in another year the daughter might be able to earn something for herself. Mrs. Searing really urged the matter. Would Mrs. Boyd write at once to Mrs. Barrington?

"Oh, mother, to think! No rent to pay, no bills to meet, no bother of cooking and house keeping. It seems too good to be true. Let me read it over again lest I must have skipped something."

It seemed more attractive at the second perusal. Lilian's heart beat with unwonted emotion. Mrs. Boyd leaned back in her chair, paler than ever but not quite so depressed.

"You must answer it, Lilian; I couldn't make it sound right, and you can tell her about yourself; I don't understand all these things. I never had any high up education. People were not thinking of it then."

Lilian was glad to do it. She knew a person of refinement and education would see what her mother missed and perhaps doubt *her* ability. She made a draft and read it aloud to Mrs. Boyd.

"It sounds beautiful; I couldn't have done it."

Was it education that gave one the power, the sense of what was appropriate, or some underlying fact that she dared not face? What if it had been a great mistake in that far back time? Could it ever be remedied?

"Oh, mother, I thought last night that I shouldn't want to live if I could never reach

any of my aims. When I hear delicious music I feel it in my very finger ends. When I read about pictures and statuary and magnificent churches I can almost see them, and a rift in the sky, an autumnal branch of red brown leaves, nooks that I have seen now and then, looks that are grand and high and beautiful stir my very soul. Where did I get this from? Was my father—"

She looked really beautiful standing there, her eyes full of inspiration, her cheeks aglow, her scarlet lips quivering. Mrs. Boyd trembled with a mysterious chill, and a shiver went over her.

"Oh, no, no! he was a plain man, a good, honest man"—her voice failed.

"And if he had lived we should have been very happy, I know; and I did like the boarding house better. I wish we could have kept it, but to sit here day after day and not see any way out of the narrow distasteful life, feeling as if you could fly—am I wicked? Poor little mother do I frighten you? Oh, don't cry, I am going to be a good daughter and not wish for impossible things if this comes true."

She clasped her mother's hands that were seldom idle so long. How thin they were with dullish, prominent veins. The mother looked

past her child rather than at her, but she could feel the glowing, spirited force like a ghost out of the past that shook its upbraiding finger at her. She leaned her face on Lilian's breast.

"Poor mother, dear mother," in a sweet comforting tone. "I'm afraid I haven't always been a loving daughter, but whatever comes we will share it together. In a few years I will be working for you, that is the splendid side to this offer."

"But—if you shouldn't be—some girls, young ladies think they must draw a line—"

"Oh, I shall not mind that if I suit Mrs. Barrington. I shall go to work and to study, and when I reach some high place in teaching, I shall smile over those petty things. A boy gets praised when he works for his education, why shouldn't a girl?"

Then she brought out her paper and wrote her letter. She wished her stationery had been finer, but she would not spend the money to gratify pride. Then she went and posted it and bought some little luxuries for dinner. After they had partaken of it she made her mother lie down and take a good rest while she went over some of her school books and worked out several problems.

Yet the waiting was very wearing. Sally

came after having had a splendid time at the Rest House and said she, Lilian, could come in two weeks. She wrote a letter to her mother's friend Mrs. Searing who was most happy that they had accepted the position, and enclosed a ten-dollar note to buy some of the little things young girls long for.

They took out last winter's clothing, but alas, it was outgrown and well worn.

"When we hear you must have a new outfit," the mother commented.

"But it seems dreadful to break into your last resource," said the girl regretfully.

"But I shall be able to replace it from my salary, for as you said we shall have no expense in the future for living. Oh, what a blessed relief! Mrs. Searing has been our good providence."

"And you are quite happy about it?"

"Yes, oh yes!"

The mother watched her elastic step, her proud carriage, the attractive face that had so much vigor and purpose. Oh, she was not of her kind. At times the thought was terrifying.

Then the longed for letter came. It began:

"My dear Miss Boyd. I was much pleased with your letter and the consideration evinced

for your mother. I hope the change will benefit her. Mount Morris is considered a very healthy place and it is certainly beautiful. I hope you will both be very happy here, and you seem not only an ambitious girl but quite willing to work for the things you desire." Then follows a description of the school and the duties, and what would be expected of the mother, the routes of travel and several time tables enclosed. Mrs. Barrington would like them to come as soon after the 20th of August as they could.

Lilian could not conceal her joy. They shopped a little, finding some bargains from early spring left-overs. They packed up a few things and disposed of the rest. Lilian's few friends were surprised. Sally hoped she would not be disappointed.

"Mount Morris has such a pretty sound," exclaimed Lilian, "and I think Mrs. Barrington is a tall and stately woman with the grand beauty you sometimes see in a picture. I want her complexion to be lovely and her hair snowy white, and her voice like the music that makes you feel sorry when it stops. I want to like her very much, and make myself useful to her."

"I am quite sure she will like you," returned the mother.

Lilian felt as if she could dance and sing. Was there such a thing as being too glad and happy? To go out of this poor old life with its pinches, and the sordid economies to a lovely home! She read Mrs. Searing's letter over and over again. These were the things that appealed to her, that she enjoyed in every fibre of her being. She glanced at her mother. Why the face was almost stolid! Oh, that was wicked! She had been so good and kind. Was it not the hard grind of poverty and hopeless work, never making any advance, that quenched the vitality of soul and brain? *She* must make her mark before hope dropped out of the years. She had watched her teachers in a curious manner, though she was too young to understand analysis of character. Some were favorites, some had favorites, girls who were of the noted families or had prosperity back of them. There were others, one she had liked very much who seemed to study with you, to help you to understand. Her classes always had many of the finest pupils. That was the kind of teacher she meant to be.

Of course there had been slights, sometimes sneers. These lilies of the field in their fine

array longed to crowd their mates out in the arid, dusty highway. She stood her ground and she was a fine scholar. She was helpful, too; she had no sneers or cruel laughs over the blunders of others.

A few of her mates were truly sorry to part with her and surprised to find she was going to a high-up Seminary to be trained for a teacher. The teacher she liked so much was away on her vacation.

So they left the old noisy, dirty factory city. It was Lilian's first journey in the great world. And oh how large and beautiful it was! They passed thriving towns, beautiful villages, great fields of waving corn, fruit orchards, then towns again, rivers, lakes, high hills cleft by rocky passes that sparkled in places as if set by gems. Then stretches so serene so instinct with fairy beauty she drew long breaths and dreamed of delightful futures, and what is a girl of sixteen filled with a love of beauty and ambition worth if she cannot dream some grand ventures.

Mrs. Boyd was not interested in the scenery. She gave a quiet assent to the girl's enthusiasms and presently Lilian ceased to appeal. It was so when she had read stirring prose or exquisite poetry aloud.

Mrs. Boyd was going over her past life. It had been much in her mind the last year. A commonplace factory girl earning her living, an orphan at that. Her dream was a lover, presently, marriage, a little home, and keeping it tidy, and babies of her very own. The lover came, a nice steady machinist with a little education, saving up money, marriage and the home of a few rooms, buying this and that of the simplest kind, and then the baby, a nice, plump, blue-eyed boy who grew apace and was the delight of both. What more could she ask for? That was certainly content.

He took out a small life insurance, though it almost broke her heart to think of his dying. And she never dreamed of the baby. He was so well and strong and joyous. Yet a few days' illness swept him out of the world, and almost broke their hearts. Then a little girl came. She liked girls the best, they were more to the mother. She could make their clothes, they could go out together. Then lovers would come and marriage, and all the everyday interest of new lives.

One sad day James Boyd was brought home dead. Something had gone wrong with the machinery and before it could be stopped his life had been beaten out. Neighbors were

kind to her, the employer took charge of the funeral, but there were other sorrows and losses in the world.

She had one brother of whom she had seen very little, as he had gone West when a mere boy. He had a big farm and five children and he wrote for her to come out, as his wife had recently died. The steady home looked so inviting. Yes, she would go.

The life insurance had been well invested by a friend of her husbands'.

"Don't disturb it," he counseled. "You may not like it there and want to come back, and your brother may marry again. There's enough to give you a nice start in something."

If she had never gone! How many times she had wondered! For midway in the journey there was a horrible accident in a small town where two roads crossed. The child flew out of her arms and she lay unconscious. There was no hospital. Kindly neighbors took in the wounded and the dead.

When she came to herself one morning the child was fretting and she nursed it. She could not remember distinctly, but they were both alive and she gave thanks as she hugged the child to her heart.

"Will you have some breakfast? You had

a good natural sleep last night, and the baby is all right. The other poor baby was killed and its mother is dying, maybe dead now. There was so much confusion. The baggage car was wrecked and burned, the trunks lost, and it seems so hard to get on track of relatives. Some cannot be identified.

The listener shuddered. Then the breakfast came and she ate it with an eager appetite.

"You might try getting up by and by. The railroad company are doing all they can and sending passengers to their destination."

"When was it?" in a tremulous tone.

"Two days ago; well, it will be three tonight. It was hardly midnight when it happened. I never was in an accident before. It was awful."

Emma Boyd sat up in the bed and took the child in her arms, studying it earnestly. Oh, how sweet and rosy it was with its dimpled mouth and its fringe of soft hair. Then she laid it down and crept out of bed, feeling rather shaky, but having the use of all her limbs. There was the dress hanging on her chair. She wondered what would be done. Should she go on?

There was another pocket in the side of her

skirt and she felt for that. There was the remainder of her trip ticket and some money. She had only put a small amount in her satchel and that was safe as well. Rescuers had been honest. Was it a token that she should go on?

The official was in that afternoon and made her a general allowance, she thought, for her losses. There would be a through train at nine the next morning if she was able to go.

"Could I see the—the other lady. How was the baby hurt?"

"Oh, it was all crushed. The mother was killed. One of the passengers recognized her and the lady, and though you were stunned for a long while you came partly to, and called for your baby. So we brought it, and although you were not quite rational you were so happy with it and improved rapidly. You've been fortunate, ma'am."

"Yes," with a queer, frightened sound.

"She's a beautiful woman and belongs to the quality, but her hip is broken and her back twisted, and there's something hurt in her head. She can't live—we thought her dead in the night. It's a blessing the poor baby has gone."

She lay like marble. A beautiful woman,

truly. The eyelids with their long lashes looked as if they were carven. There was only an infrequent sign of respiration.

"We hope we are on the track of some one belonging to her. The doctors want her moved to the hospital."

The next morning Emma Boyd journeyed out to her brother's. A coarse, common, loud voiced farmer, rough and unkempt and five unruly children. She was appalled, and a dreary stretch of prairie land with hardly a neighbor in sight. Why she had been crazy to come! and she found farm work quite too hard for her. She had better be housemaid at Laconia, or go in the mills again. And when her brother found she had a little money he was eager to get hold of it. Yes, she had better return to her native town, especially as her brother was meaning to marry again.

So she came back to Laconia which was a manufacturing town with iron mines at its elbow. There were varying fortunes as there often is with the poor. Mill work when she had to leave the child alone, then a boarding house which really prospered, but was sold with some other property for a big factory. Then housekeeping for a nervous invalid wife, and here she had met Mrs. Searing who

had proved a true friend. After that sewing, making skirts for a dressmaker and working at childrens' clothes. When it was dull times they drew on the little fund. The girl was ambitious and had mapped out her own life, different from what her mother had planned. They loved each other but it was as if two foreign natures were trying to assimilate and there was no conformable ground for perfect harmony. Yes, she would take this last step for the girl's sake; she owed it to her.

CHAPTER II

A NEW OUTLOOK

Lilian Boyd glanced around the station at Mount Morris with a kind of joyous surprise and wonder. The beautiful town with its straight streets, some of them with a narrow park in the centre, houses that were palatial to her inexperienced eyes, with terraced lawns, wide porches, graceful shrubbery and a profusion of flowers. True, the station was quite at one side and a little farther down the road crossed the river that went meandering along, too winding and shallow for business purposes. Opposite there was a succession of wooded hills with here and there a stately residence.

"How beautiful, mother!" Lilian cried, moved in every pulse of her being, her eyes lustrous with tears, her lips quivering.

The beauty did not so move the mother. She was embarrassed and shrank when the coachman with an authorative air approached them.

"Mrs. Boyd?" tentatively. There had been but few passengers and they had gone their way.

She glanced timidly at Lilian who answered for her.

"Give me your checks, please, and I will order the trunks sent up."

"There is only one," in a deprecating tone.

Lilian was glad she had insisted on a nice new trunk.

"This way please," and he took the girl's satchel. Mrs. Boyd followed rather than led, but her daughter stood aside so that she should be assisted in first.

"What a beautiful town!" she exclaimed involuntarily. She had a feeling that they were recovering from a reverse of fortune and this was their rightful place. Then she smiled at the absurdity.

Mount Morris Seminary was rather at the lower part of the town, and a long level stretched between that and the river, broken by a few clumps of shrubbery. The house was a handsome old style building, colonial in its aspect with its broad piazza and fluted columns going up to the second story.

There was an imposing entrance, but the *porte cochere* was at the side where the wide screen door showed a sort of reception hall, furnished with willow and splint belongings, a table with magazines and papers and two great jars of ferns.

A tidy maid received them. "Would they

please be seated, Mrs. Barrington would be down in a moment."

Lilian drew a long breath of rapture. To live in a place like this! To wander in the beautiful garden, to work and study in such inspiring environments. Yes, she had come to work as well. She had been too young to discriminate, but in an instant she seemed to realize how bitter the struggle with poverty and discouragement had been, the hurry with hardly an hour's real enjoyment. No wonder it had made her mother worn and hesitating, fearful, and here everything was so leisurely aspected.

She heard the soft trail of a gown over the stairs and rose in eager expectancy.

Mrs. Barrington was a handsome woman at sixty, tall and straight, with a gracious presence. Her hair was snowy white as the girl had hoped and lay in loose waves about her forehead. Her dark eyes were not easily evaded, but her manner of smiling serenity was in itself a welcome.

"I am afraid it has been a long and tiresome journey in this warm weather, but a few days' rest will restore you I hope. You look very delicate, Mrs. Boyd."

She gave the hand a friendly pressure.

"Mother had so much to do before we started," explained Lilian, "and the change—"

"And the parting with old friends," with her sympathetic smile. "I hope you will soon feel at home and like us all. Mrs. Searing gave you both such an excellent recommendation, and I confess I take a warm interest in girls who are eager for advancement. Now allow me to show you to your room and shall I send you up some tea? That is a rather pleasant English fashion, I am glad you came so promptly for my housekeeper has gone on her vacation and we shall have the better chance to get acquainted."

"Oh, thank you," said Lilian warmly.

They followed her up the stairs where a cross hall led to a wing. The room was large with two single beds, the windows in white drapery, a capacious bureau, a dressing table, a washing stand in a recess, a writing desk and some book shelves. It looked so cozy and inviting.

"I will send up the tea, and I think your mother had better take a rest. If you like to come down you will find me in the hall."

"Thank you," she replied. "I shall be glad to come."

She took her mother's bonnet and wrap and placed her in the rocking chair.

"Oh, isn't this a splendid closet? It's like another room. We are going to be so happy here; I feel it in every pulse. Heaven bless Mrs. Searing for finding us this shelter. Now drink this cup of tea. Thank you," to the maid.

It was reviving.

Lilian brushed out her dress and smoothed her hair. Her coat had left some wrinkles in her shirtwaist, but she stretched and patted them out. Then when she had seen her mother comfortable on the bed, she came down. Even the little freshening made her look bright and rosy and her eyes were vivid with the light of pleasure.

Mrs. Barrington had a bit of fancy work in her hands which were white and shapely. She studied the young girl. It seemed to call up something from the long past years that eluded and yet piqued her. How different she was from the mother.

"Have you always lived in that western town, Laconia, I believe it is, and was it your mother's birthplace?"

"Yes, I am quite sure. I was away once as a baby. Mother went to her brother's after

father died but did not like it, and Laconia is an ugly manufacturing town of smoke and grime, but it is said to have a fine High School. Of course there are some rich manufacturers."

"How long were you in it?"

"Two years, and I was fairly broken hearted at the thought of not completing the course, but mother wasn't strong as she had been, and"—yes, she would be bravely honest—"we were poor, mother's little money was almost spent. Boys supported themselves while they are studying, why shouldn't girls?"

Oh, where had she seen just that proud uplifting look! It puzzled the lady.

"I am always pleased to help an ambitious girl along, and you have a dignity which will be a great aid in teaching. Mrs. Searing said that was your desire."

"I love to study. I think I shall love to teach, and sometime I hope to go to college."

"I think you will work your way there. What branches were you in?"

Lilian was very frank. She showed that she was a thorough student. History was one of her delights. Latin was the only language admitted until the third year, and in mathematics she seemed well grounded.

"I want some one to take charge of a few

of the younger classes and be of service in the study hour from eight to nine. I think you will fit in admirably, but do you think your mother is quite strong enough?"—and she paused.

"Oh, she is used to sewing of all kinds. She is very tired now and I think she has been worried all the time lest something should go wrong with this nice offer. You see sewing is not very profitable ordinarily unless you can do high up dressmaking or are forewoman in some factory, and I couldn't sew for a living. It is one thing over and over. You are never learning anything new, broadening out, enjoying the wisdom of the master minds, the beautiful poetry, the grand philosophies. Oh, am I a very romantic or conceited girl?" and she paused with a bright flush.

"You are meant for a scholar."

Just that instant the trunk came and Lilian excused herself and went up with it. Her mother was up and looked rested.

"And please put on that black and white lawn, even if it is a little crumpled, and my white batiste always shakes out. It is nice if it isn't very fine."

The bell sounded and they went down. The table was laid in the pretty little tea room.

Lilian ate and drank with a sensation of delight. The china was so delicate, the table so beautifully arranged, the serving so perfect. Often in reading a story Lilian had fancied herself the heroine and enjoyed the feast.

The child has much finer breeding than the mother, Mrs. Barrington mused. She almost fancied she detected something furtive about Mrs. Boyd. Was she being won by the girl's proud face to the detriment of the mother? It seemed to her that Mrs. Boyd stood in awe of her daughter.

Afterward they went to the parlor which was a fine large room splendidly furnished, Lilian thought. There was a grand piano, an organ, two beautiful marbles, vases and pictures. There was a wide hall that was like another room. Here on the west side was the school and recitation rooms, the girl's dining room and a commodious kitchen.

"Will you go up stairs?" asked Mrs. Barrington.

Lilian answered eagerly, Mrs. Boyd followed.

Over this side were the dormitories and baths. Some rooms accommodated two beds, others only one. They were neat and pleasant and had been lately put in order.

"I do not care for more than twenty boarding pupils," explained Mrs. Barrington. "That makes a nice family with sufficient variety of character. I am much interested in the development of girls, and the town has nothing detrimental in it. We have a fine music hall where there are concerts and lectures, occasionally a play, and a nice library. The walks and drives about are beautiful."

The hall was not so wide up here. There were two entrances to the family side, the one to Mrs. Barrington's rooms which was divided by a short hall from those of the assistants. Two of the teachers lived at the school, though one of them had a room where she could be in touch with the girls.

When they reached her room Mrs. Boyd said—

"If you don't mind I will retire. I am so little used to long journeys that this has fatigued me. No, Lilian you need not stay. I shall not want anything. By morning I shall be rested," and she waved her away.

"Are you quite sure?" asked the girl, "and you will not be lonely?"

"Oh no, I shall enjoy the quiet."

"Are you fond of music? asked Mrs. Barrington. "Shall I play a little for you?"

"Oh, that would be delightful. I have heard very little that might be called refined music."

Then she knew the difference.

She was charmed, though the hostess played mostly the simpler things. She thought she could have listened all night.

A night's rest refreshed Mrs. Boyd very much and the certainty that Lilian had found a good friend. For she knew she could not stand the struggle much longer. She was really worn out.

Her duties were explained in a very kindly manner. There were the linen closets at hand, the bedding that she was to deal out as it was needed, the table napery. What she did for the girls was quite her own affairs.

"And you must not allow them to impose on you. My rule is that all small bills must be settled once a month. Most of the girls get their allowance then. You will have considerable leisure for yourself. I hope you will soon feel very much at home."

As for Lilian she seemed in an enchanted land. Such stores of splendid reading, such a magnificent out of doors! She and her mother were sent out to drive, and the town was like the places she had read about in books or the

higher grade monthly papers. Then Mrs. Dane, the housekeeper, returned and Miss Arran, who was a kind of secretary, took her outing.

Mrs. Dane was a tall, rather severe looking person. All disputes with the servants and any discomforts in the rooms were under her jurisdiction. Why it was like a little kingdom in itself.

"Mrs. Boyd doesn't look very robust and seems rather timid, uncertain, though if she *is* capable—" Mrs. Dane began rather sharply.

"She has been seamstress to a dressmaker for several years. I fancy she has had it pretty hard for the last year or two, but Miss Lilian is very bright and energetic, only I am afraid she will hold her head rather too high."

"I fancy she will make an excellent teacher. That is her aim."

Mrs. Barrington had looked through the big book of photographs of school girls. Some turns of the head, some glances and a sound in the voice still puzzled her, but it was connected with something in the past. Few young girls made characteristic portraits. Ah, here was one who had just that poise, that eager ambitious expression. A Miss Mortimer who certainly possessed fine abili-

ties, and a resonant voice. She had taken the lead in school entertainments, and then she had joined a theatrical troupe and married a third rate actor, to the lady's great disappointment.

"There is some likeness," she mused, "only the voice is much gentler, more truly musical. It must be that is the elusive suggestion, and Miss Boyd is wild over Shakespeare. It shall be my purpose to prevent her from being an actress, unless she can stand in the front ranks."

Lilian and Miss Arran became friends almost at once. Both were fond of walking, and to Lilian the beautiful aspect of the town, the woods and the picturesque river with its many windings and suggestive nooks where she always found a new touch of beauty stirred her with a vivid and intense delight.

Then the real life began. Girls trouped in, trunks were set down with a thump or oftener carried up on the third floor for unpacking. Girls in the remnant of summer suits, for it was still warm, others in cloth or serge, laughing chatting, running to and fro. How bright and merry it all was!

It took some time to get settled. The first grade girls who were to be the next year grad-

uates, if they chose, were at one table with Mrs. Barrington and Madame Eustis, the French teacher; the other had Miss Arran, Miss Davis, and the new scholars or the second grade old ones. Lilian was at this table, though they could have their meals in their own rooms.

She felt very sorry for her neighbor, Alice Nevins, who was dreadfully homesick and scarcely tasted anything, winking desperately to keep her eyes from overflowing. Some of them looked very bright and jolly.

"Girls," exclaimed Louie Howe, as a group gathered on the lawn, "there's a new pupil teacher, and you know that's one of Mrs. Barrington's fads. Last year's girl wasn't much of a success it seems. I think it's that lanky girl in brown silk who looks half frightened out of her wits, and her mother is the seamstress and caretaker. I wouldn't have put her in brown silk with that dull brown hair and wretched complexion."

"Thank fortune she isn't at our table!"

"Oh, Mrs. Barrington wouldn't put such a looking object with us. She really doesn't know enough to last over night. There are eight new scholars, three with us come for finishing touches, five in the second grade."

"There's a girl I'd like to know with that splendid light hair, just the least bit wavy. She sat opposite Miss Arran, and had a blue lawn frock with the baby waist and lace yoke. She is fine looking; a little too grave to be handsome, but her complexion is lovely. She's a princess in disguise, I can tell by the way she holds her head. I shall throw myself at her feet when I get a chance. It is a case of love at first sight. There she is with that brown girl. I'd go over but I am afraid of being snubbed. I do wonder who she can be, and there she's taking that Elma Ransom under her wing. It will take the child five years to get up to our first division."

"That brown girl as you call her is a Miss Nevins. Her parents have gone abroad, I've learned that much, and they are well to do. That is the golden mean between comparative and great wealth. Miss Vincent introduced her to me, and then she turned her to that rather striking looking girl."

"And which do you suppose is Miss Boyd? Or has she run back to mamma's sheltering wing?"

"I think she has discreetly retired. We must make some excuse to get in to our lady of the needle. I'm sorry Miss Nevins isn't

better looking if she has plenty of money."

"Well, the gods were just this time. She will need the money to illumine her pathway. Just see that girl in the blue frock. Why, they are thronging about her."

Louie Howe went over and caught little Elma Ransome by the arms. She was short and rather plump with an infantile face that made her look younger than her years.

"Why Elly, I'm glad to see you back. Now this year you must study hard and fill up some of the vacancies we graduates make." Then she glanced around the group.

Elma flushed and then said a little awkwardly—"This is Miss Boyd, and this Miss Nevins, and—I don't know all the names yet."

"You have more new scholars than we. Then she made a stiff little bow and turned away to her own group.

"Girls, what *do* you think? Why, I nearly fainted with surprise. 'Looks *is* often deceiving.' That girl I thought a princess in disguise *is* Miss Boyd. Why she has airs and graces enough to amaze you. If her mother is like that, will we ever dare to ask her to darn our stockings?"

"Miss Boyd!" exclaimed a chorus of voices.

"Well, it's good we have learned the fact

at once so we shall not make any blunders. She'll be a sort of charity scholar working for her board and training. Of course we shan't have anything to do with her as she isn't in our set. Though it wouldn't be so bad but for the mother."

"That's real snobbish, Louie," said a girl.

"Well, I don't know, you have a right to choose your friends, and I heard Mrs. Dane say something about their being very poor."

"Well, she's stylish and she has an air, and Mrs. Barrington wouldn't take in any one objectionable. If my father should die I might be glad to have some one take me in, and I expect to teach when I am through. You see father has four more to educate."

"Well, Mattie Vincent, you can make a bosom friend of her for all that I care."

"Oh girls, don't let's quarrel about her when we have just come and are glad to see each other. I dare say Miss Boyd wont trouble us."

"She'll be pushing, and aspiring to the best —you'll see! One can tell by the way she holds her head, and she *could* stare you out of countenance with those bold black eyes. I shall keep on my guard. You'll see me take her down if she presumes."

But Lilian Boyd did not presume. She went to church with her mother on Sunday in a simple white pique frock, and spent the evening on the back porch with Miss Arran, not even going in the parlor for the singing, and on Monday school duties began. The classes received considerable accessions from the day scholars. Lilian had two of the younger classes and she found a real pleasure in the teaching. Then she was in the Latin class and proved herself an excellent scholar.

The evening hour was sometimes rather trying. Some of the girls asked foolish questions just to perplex her. Occasionally she suggested they should ask Miss Davis. The younger ones were quite tractable, though now and then a spirit of fun broke out, set a-foot generally by the larger girls.

CHAPTER III

FOOD FOR CONSIDERATION

Lilian Boyd did not want to cross the line of division that was acutely felt and yet so nicely projected that a faint move on her part would bring about a rebuff. She had the youthful longing for girlish friendships, for little confidences about books they liked, about aims and the future. Some of the pupils were so attractive; and it was because she was the caretaker's daughter; she saw it when they came in to her mother with any errand, when they passed her in the halls with a supercilious nod.

But then, why need she care? They would go their way presently and she might remain. She knew she had won Mrs. Barrington's favor. That lady made it a point of her joining the Sunday evening singing and she found that she had a good, flexible voice.

One lovely October afternoon she thought she would walk down to the river whose banks were now a blaze of color. Some one called and she turned. It was Alice Nevins who *was* sometimes tiresome. The girls were going down in town and one of them had really asked her if she would not like to join them.

A gratified light shone in her eyes for a moment. There was something in the other's face that gave her a quick warning. There was some plot underneath.

"Thank you very much but I cannot go this afternoon. I hope you will all have a nice time."

Then she went to her room. Her mother was folding up some sewing. "There is so little to do," and she smiled vaguely.

"Come out and walk with me."

"No, I don't feel equal to it, I will put a shawl about me and sit on the porch."

"Shall I come and read to you?"

"No, dear, it is an effort to listen. I'll just sit and think."

"Mother, are you satisfied here?"

"Oh, my child, I could not have dreamed of anything so comfortable, and for your sake—you *are* happy?" with a touch of wistfulness.

"Oh, it is so delightful, and then to think that I shall fit myself for a nice position presently. Then mother dear we will have a few rooms and a real home again."

"Oh, you are so good," in a tremulous tone.

Lilian kissed her. She wondered why her mother's eyes rested on her at times with

that unfathomable look and the lips would move, then suddenly compress.

So she walked down past the summer house where the Virginia creeper was flaunting long scarlet branches in the wind.

"Oh, Miss Boyd!"

She turned. Alice Nevins ran out. Her face was red and swoolen with weeping.

"Oh, what is the matter?"

"Let me come with you? Oh, I'm so homesick, and I just hate some of the girls. They laugh when I blunder. I don't know things. I just hate school! Papa *would* send me here. Mamma begged to take me abroad. I'm sure I could have learned a great many things. People say travel is an education. I hate to study books. Do you really love it?"

"Yes, very much, and for all it brings to you. Were you never at school before?"

"Only a little. Then I had a governess. You see, I was growing fast and mamma thought I oughtn't study. She wasn't very well and papa wanted to take her somewhere in Italy, and he sent me here, and some of the girls *do* make fun of me. Can't you *feel* it when they are laughing at you?"

Lilian flushed. "I try to think of some-

thing else. They are not really worth minding."

"I know I'm not pretty. Oh, I wish I were! And you have such a lovely complexion. How is it made up?"

"Made up? What do you mean?"

"One of the girls said it was, and that sometimes you painted."

Lilian was angry then.

"My paint and powder are soap and water," she returned, indignantly. "It is a shame for a young girl to do such things."

"But you *are* pretty. Must your mother be the caretaker here? What does she have to do?"

"She looks after the sewing and the mending. Yes, because we are poor, we both have to earn our living. Some day I mean to teach and take care of her."

"Where is your father?"

"Oh, he died when I was a baby."

"Well—I'm awful sorry. Do you like that Phillipa Rosewald?"

"I don't know much about her."

She makes fun of so many things, and she tells you words that sound wrong when you pronounce them. I said something yesterday and the girls giggled and Miss Davis thought

I did it purposely and I was marked down."

"It was a very mean thing," Lilian's cheek glowed with indignation.

"Then Miss Rosewald tells such funny stories. Four or five of the girls just hang together and they think they are everything. But I guess father is as rich as any of their fathers. Only I wish I was real handsome."

"Oh, my dear, I would think of my studies instead. Now let us talk them over. What is it that bothers you most?"

"Oh, everything."

"But you *must* study. Now, won't you try this evening. I'll help you all I can."

"Oh, I wish I was with mamma. I shall just tell her that I hate school. What's the use of so much education anyhow? Girls get married."

Lilian felt that Mrs. Nevins was a very poor mother not to have taught her daughter a little common sense. Then she asked how old Alice was.

"I was fifteen last May."

"And I will be sixteen in June. I wasn't quite fourteen when I was promoted to the High School, where I spent two years."

"Oh, but I'm not going to teach or anything. Mamma said she would be sure to

send for me next vacation, but that is almost nine dreary months away," with a profound sigh.

"And you ought to learn a good deal in that time, so that you will not be classed with the ignorant and conceited girls who think their money will cover everything. There are so many young people going abroad nowadays, college girls who have all the nice points of travel by heart?"

"Oh, dear, I just can't study!" desperately.

"Oh, try. Now this evening I will help you. You see," smiling, "very little knowledge comes natural. It is true some acquire easier than others, but it is the continued effort after all."

"Oh, dear, I wish you had been my sister. Papa is always bemoaning that there are not more of us, but mamma says if there were I would have to go without many things. I've some lovely jewelry but papa would put it in the safe deposit, and he went and bought this cheap little watch for school. My nice one cost one hundred dollars. It's a real beauty, and mamma has lots of diamonds. I have two, they were birthday rings. Don't they have parties here when you dress up? I brought my pretty white silk, and I have a

pink one with lots of lace, and my fur coat will be sent to me, it is being altered a little. It's real seal, and mother has such a lovely Russian sable. Oh, I do like pretty clothes, but Mrs. Barrington made out a list that seemed very plain for a high-up finishing school—don't you think so?"

"I have not seen it. Most girls come to study and fit themselves for the station they are to occupy. Unless you are going in society I think there is little need of very fine clothes. Now let us talk a little about your studies. Miss Davis feels quite concerned about you."

Miss Nevins pouted a little. Lilian felt her nice walk was spoiled so she turned her attention to the ignorant girl who "just hated study." What a foolish mother she must have, while it seemed that her father was far more sensible.

Mrs. Barrington stood on the porch as they returned. She detained Lilian with a wave of the hand. When Miss Nevins was out of hearing she said in an approving tone—

"I am glad to see you take an interest in that poor child. Miss Davis thinks her lamentably ignorant. I am really sorry I accepted her, but her father wrote such urgent, sensible let-

ters. Her mother must be a very foolish body and the girl is extremely backward. It is asking a good deal of you to take a little pains with her, but I see that you have an attractive way with you. You will make an excellent teacher, and I hope to keep you a long while."

"Oh, thank you, I will try to do my best," Lilian returned, delighted with the praise.

Miss Arran always came in the study room, generally bringing a bit of embroidery for it was not expected that Miss Boyd should attend to the upper division with some girls older than herself. The other class were quite at the lower end of the room, ranged around the table. Miss Boyd seated herself next to Miss Nevins and patiently explained, but it was very hard to keep the girl's attention to the subject in hand. She thought she had never seen any one so utterly indifferent and with so little ambition. There had been stolid, slow-witted girls among the operatives in Laconia in the grammar school, but they really desired to learn.

Miss Davis paused the next day to say—

"Miss Boyd your good training does begin to take effect. Miss Nevins had such excellent recitations today that I was pleased beyond measure. You are way up in Mrs.

Barrington's good graces, I can tell you."

Lilian flushed at the commendation.

For the next hour the girls could have a social time in each others' rooms or the library. There was a crowd of eager talkers with Miss Rosewald.

"Yes," she was saying. "I ran over the housekeeper just as she was coming out of Rinsey's. Zay will be here by the 20th, and she's coming right to school, for the Major and Mrs. Crawford are going to the Mediterranean. The German doctors and the baths did wonders for her and she can walk without crutches. A friend is to take them on his yacht and they'll be home at Christmas, and there will be Vincent's graduation. Dear me! I hope I can go up to West Point. They say the balls are splendid. The Crawford house is to be all done over, and no doubt there will be a big housewarming there."

"Oh, it will be just delightful to have Zay back again. I suppose that's the reason Miss White was put in with Buttons and that room fixed up so nice. Mrs. Barrington has had word, of course. We just need her to round out, I was going to say, the atmosphere. It's too studious. Those Kirkland girls are going to college, dearly loved cousins, quite sufficient

for themselves, and there's that granery, yallery, Grosvenor Gallery, one who writes poetry and is too lackadaisical for anything. What we want is a rollicking, fun loving girl to start us."

"And something's the matter with you, Phil. Have you been crossed in love?"

Phillipa Rosewald turned scarlet. "No," she answered, "it's two of them and I can't decide. One is rich and homely as a hedge fence and always says *drawring* and *reel*, but has lots of money and a fair enough family back of him. The other is handsome and oh, my! gay as a lark, but he had about run through with a fortune, and I'm afraid he will flirt now that the restraint of my serious and imposing presence is removed."

"Serious, that's good. Why didn't you say severe?"

Phil's love affairs were the entertainment of her coterie.

"Oh, girls, did you notice—well, I have a new name for them. 'Beauty and the Beast.' How devoted they were this evening!" broke in Louie Howe.

"Oh, you mean that Nevins girl? But *do* you call Miss Boyd handsome?"

"Well — she has a fine complexion —" Louie wrinkled up her nose.

—"and lots of beautiful hair, a good figure and regular features. Maybe she lacks a certain style to make her noticeable—or something—"

"Money and position. I don't just see why a common sort of girl who has to earn her living should be above the average, and that Nevins girl's father is one of the firm of bankers in New York and London, and she's horrid!"

"Oh, girls," exclaimed May Gedney, "they kissed each other last night in the hall, a regular smack; I heard it. Fancy that pimply cheek being pressed against yours! and that lap-over tooth that sticks her lips out, and those pale gray-green eyes. Yes, Miss Boyd does look handsome by contrast."

There was a great giggle. "We must watch the course of this ardent love. Perhaps *she* understands the worth of contrast."

They went back to Zay Crawford, who was a general favorite. She and a brother nine years older than herself, a passed midshipman had gone to Germany in the summer, where her mother had been taking treatment. The Major had accompanied her. Miss Crawford had taken over the young people.

It was true, to Lilian's surprise, that Alice Nevins had clasped both arms around her and kissed her rapturously, exclaiming—"You are so sweet! Oh, I wish mother and father would adopt you! I'd just like to have you for a sister. I've never seen a girl before that I wanted."

Lilian freed herself and went to her room. She was not an effusive girl. At Laconia she had made some friends, but she was too proud to aspire to the higher ranks or accept overtures from them. She felt sorry for Alice Nevins but there was no real companionship. Yet was there not a duty? She seemed to occupy a peculiar position, and loved to listen to the fascinating bits of talk, places one and another had seen, music, operas, paintings, lectures, a knowledge of real things, not merely those gleamed from books.

Well, she must earn them herself. She used to dream of them at nights when the lights were put out. She was changing curiously, she felt it herself. It was not only in the added self-reliance, the nameless little ways of refinement and grace the intuitive knowledge of what we call good breeding, and the cordial smile of commendation from Mrs. Barrington thrilled every pulse.

Mrs. Boyd was not vulgar but she was undeniably commonplace. High thoughts such as stirred Lilian in verse, never roused her. Yet the girl did feel indignant at times at the manner in which some of the girls addressed her mother when they were uniformly polite to Miss Arran.

She was quite undecided about her duty to Miss Nevins. The kiss had come so suddenly she had no time to evade it but she took good care to do so the next night. Lilian had never been an effusive girl. She had almost broken her mother's heart in her little more than babyhood, when after a rapturous caress she had half pulled from the enclosing arms and said in a willful fashion—"Don't kiss me so hard, I don't liked to be kissed!" And later on when her mother had always called her Lily, she had said emphatically—"Why don't you call me Lilian! I'm too big a girl to be called by such a baby name as Lily and I don't like it."

That began a sort of gulf between them that the mother never had the courage to bridge over. There was a curious dignity about her that even the obtuse Miss Nevins could not surmount.

One day the girl brought her two beautiful orchids.

"You've been so good about my lessons that I wanted to do something, and these were"—hesitatingly—

"Handsome and expensive," in a chilling tone. "They were the finest things the florist had, and mamma always sends me some money in her letters, while papa sends my allowance to Mrs. Barrington. So I feel that is clear gain," laughing. "Mrs. Barrington is rather strict about allowances, and she's shut down on so much sweets and hot chocolates. Do you think it hurts one's complexion?"

"It certainly hurts yours. I would give them up, and so much cake; the regular school living is good enough, and you should take a cold bath in the morning."

"Ouch! That would be horrid," and the girl shuddered.

"But you want to be beautiful!"

"Oh, I am afraid that wouldn't make me beautiful, and when I am quite grown up I shall have lovely clothes, and it doesn't so much matter when you are rich."

Lilian glanced at her with a sort of pity that any girl could be so silly, and a sense of disgust, also.

"Miss Nevins, I must say one thing that I want you to observe for the future. You must not make me costly gifts nor any kind of gifts. The help I am giving you Mrs. Barrington wishes me to give to any girl who needs it. It is simply my duty, you see, and Mrs. Barrington repays me."

Miss Nevins looked as if she could not understand. Then she struck a rather tragic pose.

"Oh, if you would only love me!" she cried, clasping her hands together. "I am so lonely! I miss mamma every hour. Then I think I could learn to like it here, and I'd try to study. I'd give up cream soda and—yes, I *would* take the bath, but it must be warm."

"Oh, you foolish thing!" Lilian laughed in spite of herself. "There, I cannot stay here talking, and you must go to your lessons."

"No, I'll get some other girl and go down town. You are cold and cruel."

She was rather sullen all the evening and failed in some recitations the next day. After that she studied with a better grace.

"Miss Arran," Lilian said on Sunday morning, "do you think I might take mother to that little Chapel in Chester street. I think she would feel more at home there."

"Oh, certainly. Mrs. Barrington insists that the girls shall attend at least one service a Sunday. Then there is the Bible Class here, which she makes very interesting. She and many of the girls go to Trinity, but I like the Chapel a good deal myself. It is a Methodist, you know."

"Yes, mother was used to that service."

So they went together, though Louie Howe said—"We'll manage it so Beauty and the Beast will walk together," but she missed her plan.

It was a very simple and sweet service and the sermon was on hidden sins. Lilian wondered if her's was undue pride, the desire to rise above her station? She glanced at her mother. The tears were coursing silently down her sunken cheeks. Was she missing the love a daughter ought to give? She looked so frail and delicate that the girl's heart went out to her as it never had before.

In the vestibule stood a sweet faced young woman waiting while an elderly lady was talking to her friend. She came near and held out her hand in a friendly manner.

"You are a stranger here, but we are very glad to welcome you," she began cordially.

"You are one of the Seminary young ladies, I saw you on the porch one day when I was passing."

"Yes," Lilian returned, then added "in a way. And this is my mother, Mrs. Boyd."

"And I am Miss Trenham. This is my mother." The two ladies shook hands in an old-fashioned manner.

"Do you go up Elm Place? Then let us walk together. Is this your first year here?"

"Yes," answered Lilian.

"I hope you liked our clergyman and will come again."

"I think mother will feel more at home."

Miss Trenham smiled.

"I come here largely for my mother's sake. I think the simple service comes nearer the heart of the older people. I like Trinity church, I like the service of the whole year round, and the music is fine. I like coming in the house of God with a reverent hymn. You are one of the newer scholars, are you not?"

"Yes, we came in August. My mother has a position in the household." She would not sail under false colors. "And I am to study for a teacher."

"Oh, then we'll have a mutual bond. I am a teacher in the Franklin School."

"Oh, I know where that is," with a smile.

"You like your own school?"

"Oh, it is delightful, and such a beautiful home. Such a lovely town—"

Her face was radiant with pleasure. Then they paused.

"We go on a few blocks further. We live in Gray street. I am very glad to have met you. Shall I see you again next Sunday morning?"

"Oh, yes," promised Lilian.

Then she took her mother's arm.

"Did you like it mother dear? I thought the service very simple and sweet."

"And the lady was so friendly. I told her we were at the Seminary. The daughter teaches school, and she asked me to visit them—to come to tea some day. Do you suppose Mrs. Barrington would object? Would you like to go?" timidly.

"Why it would be very pleasant."

"Everybody seems so grand, I'm glad not to go to the high-up tables; I'm so afraid of mistakes. You see when people get along in

life it isn't so easy to take up new ways. But that Mrs. Trenham seemed like some of the Laconia folks."

"Yes, we will go again next Sunday," said Lilian. "And to tea the first time we are invited."

CHAPTER IV

THE GRACE OF ENDEAVOR

The door of Mrs. Boyd's room stood partly open. Louie Howe gave a light tap and marched in with an air that was rather insolent.

"Oh, Mrs. Boyd, I've given my walking dress such an awful tear! Mrs. Barrington said she was quite sure you could mend it. You see I'm going to a sort of musicale in about an hour and I couldn't take it to the tailors. It's my best suit, too, and—it must be done very neatly."

Mrs. Boyd examined it. "Yes, it's pretty bad, I've done worse though, and part of it will be under the plait. Let me see if I have the right color."

She opened a box of spools and took up several colors to match.

"Oh, yes, here is one," and she gave a smile of gratification.

Louie dropped into a chair. Was she going to wait? Lilian wondered.

"What a pleasant room this is, Mrs. Boyd! But all the rooms are just cozy and nice. Of course Mrs. Barrington can afford to keep it in a lovely fashion for her prices are high and

she doesn't care to take any scholars only from the best families. I do wonder how that Nevins girl slipped in? Her father is a first-class banker, I have understood. They have a big house in New York and a summer house at Elberon, and their New York house is rented out for seven thousand dollars; but isn't she a terror? How do you stand her, Miss Boyd?"

"She has had very little training. Her mother has been ill and seems very indulgent," answered Lilian quietly. "Yet she may make a very fair scholar."

"It's funny to hear her talk. Bragging, we call it. Do you suppose the stories are true?"

"Mrs. Barrington would know," was the cautious reply.

"Well, I suppose she must be satisfactory or she wouldn't be here. But there's common blood back of her somewhere. Money doesn't give you the prestige of good birth. That always shows—don't you think so?" with a confident upward glance.

"I have not had experience enough with the world to judge," answered Lilian. "We lived in a factory town—"

"And in such places there are a good many newly rich, and they think they have it all."

Mrs. Boyd had been straightening out the rent and basting it on a piece of stiff paper.

"I wonder if you would mind asking Mrs. Dane if there were irons on the range."

She looked straight at Louie, not at all as if she was asking a favor. Lilian was on her knees straightening and dusting the lower shelf of the book case. She did not even turn her head.

Miss Howe went out with what she thought was a stately step and frowned at the girl on the floor whose business was to wait on her mother. When she was clear out of sight and hearing Lilian sprang up and clasped her arms about her mother.

"Oh, that was just splendid!" she cried, her eyes soft and shining.

"I—I think I meant—either of you!" hesitating.

"It was her business and it won't hurt her to wait on herself. The girls go down to the kitchen and iron out ribbons and things. I'm not their maid, and she had no business to stand here gossipping about Miss Nevins. I'm sorry for her and I don't like her, but there are some girls that are real friendly. There are two girls going to college next year. They have money, too, and they think a degree a

great thing, and know of girls who have taught awhile and then taken a year or two and taught again. I was reading such a fine book—this girl and her mother took a cottage and boarded the overflow of girls and had a lovely time, she helping and studying. That's what we will try to do, and this year you will get real well and strong. Oh, isn't it nice not to have any care of things and so much comfort?"

The mother bent over her work turning her head aside so that a tear shouldn't fall on it. Oh, wouldn't the child be better off without her? She was so courageous, so fertile in expedients. Oh, they could not be all day dreams.

The skirt was beautifully darned and pressed and sent to Miss Howe's room by the maid. Then a note came to Mrs. Boyd. "Wouldn't she and Miss Lilian walk home with the Trenhams from church tomorrow morning and dine and meet a delightful young friend who had graduated at a Woman's College. Lilian might like to hear the experiences."

"Oh, that will be just royal!" the girl exclaimed. "Mother you must rest this afternoon. If there is any mending let me do it."

"Nothing is needed. Sometimes I feel as if

I did not really earn my salary, and Mrs. Barrington is so kind."

"And now I begin to feel quite at home with some of the young ladies. I *am* proud of being a good scholar, but I study with all my might and main," laughing. "And next year I may earn a little money."

Sunday was bright but rather blowy. The leaves fell and whirled about like flocks of birds and the sky was like a June day. Miss Benson had come to church, a bright rather pretty woman of five or six and twenty. Her voice was attractive. Lilian had come to remark the differences in voices. Some *did* repel you; many were indecisive.

They walked down to Elm place. This was the old end of the street in a row of small detached houses with gardens running back to the next street and a space of six feet or so between. The Trenham's was in very nice tidy order, the windows with neat white drapery.

"Our next door neighbors are considered quite a detriment," explained Edith Trenham. "The woman professes to be a clairvoyant, and there are five children, two very unruly boys. I do hope they will go away in the spring."

Edith ushered her guests into the pretty

parlor where the cheerful fire seemed to radiate pleasure as well as heat. In a small wheeling chair sat the invalid, a pale little girl of fifteen, but who looked years younger. She held out her hand to Lilian.

"Oh, what pleasure it is to see you," she cried. "Your color is radiant—like a June rose, isn't it mamma? and such beautiful hair. Edith is always well but she hasn't much color. Oh, if you could have seen our roses in June! They were bewildering. Don't you feel that gorgeous things sometimes are? Then the next door boys came over and stole the roses and broke the bushes. I cried nearly all day. It seemed as if I had been pulled to pieces. The mother said she was sorry but that wouldn't put the roses back."

"Claire you will find is quite a spoiled child," Edith said, stooping to kiss her. She was very pale and the dark hair framing in the little face gave her an almost uncanny look.

When they had laid aside their wraps Claire took possession of Lilian again, and wanted to know about the girls in the Seminary.

"Why, Claire, they are most all young ladies," said Edith.

"Well—are there many pretty ones? and

what do they do beside study? They would get tired studying all the time."

Lilian explained that they visited in each others rooms and had calisthenics and danced, and went through some beautiful evolutions with Indian clubs—

"Oh, how funny!" Claire interrupted. "Do they make believe they are Indians?"

"Oh, no," and Lilian explained. They had a bell double quartette and made lovely music by striking some sweet-toned bells with small wands, and they were allowed to go down town. One evening a week there were dances.

"Oh, do you dance? You look that way?"

Lilian colored. "You see I spend a good deal of my time with my mother. Then I have lessons to learn—"

"And I don't study, I read delightful books. For you must know I can never get about or do things like other children. I draw and I paint over pictures, and I have an autoharp, and a beautiful big doll that I make believe is alive and we go traveling. Edith reads about journeys."

Mrs. Trenham had been adding a few last touches to the table which had been mostly prepared in the morning, the real cooking hav-

ing been done the day before. Claire was lifted out in a cushioned chair and insisted that Lilian should sit next. Miss Benson was on the other side and took a turn with Lilian.

"Yes, she had worked her way through college. She had studied type-writing and done work for the professors and copied essays for the girls and coached backward girls, and trimmed hats, as she had a genius for millinery. Then, in vacation she had been a sort of summer governess when parents wanted to take journeys. It had all been very interesting, too, but it had taken longer, and now she was studying medicine in New York and teaching some hours a day."

"I like to teach but I don't believe I want to be a doctor, I think I should like to go to college."

"It is a fine discipline and broadens out one's mind. It makes excellent teachers, as well, and you do have many happy times. Think of a settlement of hundreds of girls!"

"Mrs. Barrington will only have twenty boarders and there are about twenty day scholars."

"Not a very large family to be sure, but

enough to give you some variety. You look as if you might be a good student."

Lilian colored.

Mrs. Trenham was entertaining the mother.

She had been a widow twelve years, but was left with a small competency. Claire had been thrown out of a carriage by a runaway horse when she was barely five and very seriously injured so that for two years she was entirely helpless and now held her life on a very frail tenure, but she was a happy child and they made her life as entertaining as possible.

"You are blest in your daughter," said Mrs. Trenham. "She is so bright and eager and vigorous, and has so much character. Well, I have Edith who has always been a great comfort, and I suppose one gets used to a burden when it is a pleasant one. Claire is very loving and we try to keep all sad things from her."

Lilian thought it a delightful afternoon. These were the kind of people you could get close to. She saw that her mother was enjoying it as well. Wasn't it rather monotonous for her at Mrs. Barrington's? At Laconia there had been neighbors dropping in, some who had known her early life and sumpathized with her misfortunes, and here, no

one. She was glad to have been taken in this kindly family.

"Oh, won't you come often?" pleaded Claire. "I like you so much, and if you could come some Saturday mamma and Edith might go out together. An old lady does come in when they go to church, but she isn't any real company. She hasn't any ideas. Don't you think old people get sort of stupid?" Lilian laughed.

Miss Benson expressed a good deal of pleasure at meeting such an ambitious girl and hoped to keep in touch with her for sometime; she might be able to counsel her or perhaps direct her on her way.

"It has been just delightful," she said when they reached their own rooms.

She did not go in to sing but read to her mother. Yes, she would try in the future to share more of her life with the colorless one. She had resolved to make the great sacrifice when she found she could not go on with school, and lo, this had been the outcome. They were delightfully sheltered, there were no hardships, only pin pricks and she would be silly to mind those. There was a sudden commotion through the place on Monday morning.

Such glad bursts of welcome, such joyous laughter and absolute peans of delight.

For Zaidee Crawford had come. She, Lilian, was not in it and she wondered if at any time or in any place there would be such unalloyed gladness at her coming.

A girl of fifteen, bewilderingly pretty in the changes that passed over her mobile face. A complexion that was pink and pearl, golden hair that was a mass of waves and shining rings that seemed to ray off sunshine with every movement of the head that had a bird-like poise; a low broad Clytie brow and eyes that were the loveliest violet color, sometimes blue, sometimes the tenderest, most appealing gray. Her smile was captivating, disarming. It played about her lips that shut with dimples in the corners, it quivered in her eyes and made the whole face radiant.

Why Zaidee Crawford wasn't spoiled by the indulgence and adulation was quite a mystery. She had been longed for before her birth—one brother was seven the other nine years older. Major Crawford thought the tie between father and daughter was one of the choicest of heaven's blessings. He was proud of his sons whose straightforward, honorable careers in the lines they had chosen,

to his great satisfaction, gave him profound happiness. Connected with Zaidee's birth had been the great sorrow of their lives that had cost Mrs. Crawford years of excruciating suffering and at first it seemed hopeless invalidism. In one of the Indian skirmishes the Major had been severely wounded in the leg that had left it lame and rather stiff. He resigned from the army to devote himself to his wife and the old residence that had been in his family for generations. And at this period a relative died and left him a large fortune. Beyond improving his estate and having the best medical attendance for his wife there was no real change in their living. They were both too sensible not to know how easily boys might be led astray by unwise indulgence in money. They were both high minded with a fine sense of right and justice. Both had gone down the dark valley and looked death in the face and thereafter walked humbly before God.

Zaidee Crawford had been a day scholar except at intervals when her mother had been taken away for medical treatment. Oddly enough, Mrs. Crawford as a girl, had been educated by Mrs. Barrington, then a young and childless widow, with an ardent desire for some

useful aim in life, and they had remained the warmest of friends. Mrs. Barrington's comfort and faith had cheered many an hour of despondency.

But the Major had once said—"Margaret, while you *can* endure the suffering, always think that I would much rather have you as you are than to have lost you in that terrible time, and God has spared us our two fine sons and our sweet daughter."

Yes, there was much joy still left to life.

Zay went to her classes as a visitor this morning. There were many smiles of welcome. After all, she had not fallen so far behind, but her brother had been coaching her. There were four new scholars in the Latin class. The Kirklands, Louie Howe, who had been promoted, and a Miss Boyd, who roused a peculiar interest; but then her rendering in the translation was exceedingly fine.

"Who is that tall girl with the bronzy gold hair? And isn't she a fine reader?" exclaimed Zaidee.

They were in a little group of old friends. Louie Howe laughed, Phillipa made a funny face.

"Well?" and flushing a little she glanced up, inquiringly.

"The caretaker's daughter. We are democratic this year," announced May Gedney.

"The caretaker—"

"A Mrs. Boyd, a pale little nonentity, but she darns in the most elegant fashion you ever saw. She had to bring her daughter you see, and the daughter is to be a teacher—is a sort of charity scholar, looks after the laggards in the evening, but she keeps her place pretty well. Of course she lives over on that side," nodding her head.

"See here," began Phillipa, "that girl has puzzled me with an elusive resemblance to somebody, Zay, it really is you. Her hair and eyes are darker, she's larger every way, she is not such a peerless maid—"

"I shouldn't feel complimented by that! Oh the idea! A girl from—well somewhere from the wild and woolly west—"

Much as Phillipa Rosewald loved her friends and she confessed to adoring Zaidee, she never stopped at a little fling.

"The compliment, of course, is to Miss Boyd. She has a temper of her own, you can catch a flash of it in her eyes, and I dare say her iron rule is what makes her mother so meek. She pets up that Nevins girl who is a—well they

are called Beauty and the Beast. How she managed to slip in here puzzles me."

"That girl is my horrid familiar, my *bete noire.* She has the room next to mine and you ought to see it. Miss Davis marked her down for untidyness, and Mrs. Barrington put her on a diet, her complexion was so horrid, but she manages to get a lot of sweets and chocolates. And the way she dresses! A modiste in New York sends her clothes and told her the color of one's frocks must match the hair or the eyes, and no one could match those gray blue green eyes, so it has to be the hair."

"I wouldn't want that dull brown hair. I don't suppose she ever brushes it. At home the maid looked after her. The mother is traveling for her health, and they are very rich."

"Oh, is she making a confidante of you, too?" laughed May Gedney. "I thought it rather funny at first, I didn't believe half she said, but her father is quite an important man in banking circles it seems, and there are diamonds galore, but he wouldn't let her wear only that diamond birthday ring at school. She was wildly in love with Miss Boyd but the girl was too hard hearted to

return it. She is a regular icicle and stony hearted and all that! Yes, her heart is irretrievably gone about the girl. They did have a kissing match one night but they don't do it any more in public! I don't know what they do in private, but the Boyd shut down on gifts which almost broke her heart, and she had spent two dollars for two orchids."

"That certainly speaks well for Miss Boyd," Zay exclaimed.

May flushed. Lately *she* had been the recipient of some gifts.

"Of course she is here to train the younger minds in the paths of knowledge while her mother mends their clothes."

"Well, is that to be despised?" asked Zay with spirit.

"Why, no, but of course you don't associate with your dressmaker's daughter, nor the store clerks though they are nice enough for the places they have to fill in life. If it wasn't for the mother she might pass muster, and you know this is the most select of schools. That is one reason mother sent me here there was no chance of making undesirable acquaintances. For one thing, the terms are too high," and Louie Howe bridled.

"Is this Miss Nevins at the highwater mark?" and there was a touch of sarcasm in Zay's tone.

"Oh let's quit the higher criticism," said another. "I want to hear Zay talk, and you've been to Berlin and that picturesque Dresden. Did you see the shepherdesses with their crooks, and Corydon making love to them, and Holland—that funny place of canals and windmills and stumpy dutchmen."

"And, oh, did you see the Kaiser?"

Zay laughed. "Yes, mounted on a fine horse, and the Empress and her pretty daughter in a state carriage. And Willard went to some sort of review with the Ambassador and was presented to the Kaiser who asked him about Annapolis, and some of the training. He thought the great Emperor very affable. Father has been at a few of the functions and seen the royal ladies in their state dresses. Then, there are some splendid professors and scientists—"

"But you didn't go to Paris?"

"No. Father and Willard spent ten days there while Aunt Kate and I staid with mother. Then she could cross the room without a cane, even. Now she can walk some dis-

tance. Oh, girls, its splendid not to have her go on crutches! And she thinks in two years or so we may go to Paris for quite a stay. You know real young girls don't understand fine pictures and all that! Willard begins his three-years cruise early in January, and in the summer Vincent will graduate and perhaps be sent off somewhere. The doctors wanted her to spend the whole winter about the Mediterranean, but she thought it would be so lovely to have our Christmas together."

"Oh, Zaidee Crawford, you're a girl to be envied! None but the rich, etc.," with sundry upturnings of the chin.

"Well, I hope I'll be able to go abroad on a wedding tour. Otherwise I won't have him!" announced Phillipa with great solemnity at which they all laughed.

"Young ladies do you know it is time to go out for exercise," said Miss Arran.

"Oh, let us go over to Crawford House," cried Zay. "Why, you will hardly know it. The two parlors are to be thrown into one—a regular drawing room, and I'm to have the prettiest study off of my bedroom. I have to decide what color I shall have them done in."

"We'll all help you."

"I just can't have blue and I like it so, but it is the one idea of blondes, therefore I avoid it."

"It seems Miss Boyd's favorite color," said Louie. "And she's not so very blondy, either.

CHAPTER V

ZAIDEE

They were the usual lot of girls in a sort of hubbub together. With the exception of the Kirklands they were not taking life seriously as yet. They studied and sang, painted, wrote verses, sometimes were caught on trigonometry and occasionally made awful translations in Latin and French. They changed their ideals, they vowed friendship and fell out with each other, they were spiteful and willful and sweet and penitent, and if "a boy's will's the wind's will," a young girl's will in the unformed years is not much better.

Phillipa Rosewald was a sort of leader. A kind of charming girl with many varieties, fascinating, making you like her when she chose and then giving you pin pricks instead of caresses. Before she put on long dresses boys were quarrelling about her and she seemed to sandwich love affairs in with her lessons; she had fine taste in dressing, she could tie a bow, or trim a hat, or furbish up an evening waist in a manner that filled her comrades with envy, and she was a fairly good scholar as well.

But Zaidee with her graciousness and sweet

temper won all hearts. Every one was eager to have some little claim upon her. Her mother's sad accident and her father being one of the survivors of a fierce Indian battle made her a sort of heroine. She was not quite an angel but very human and with the peculiar sweetness that always disarms criticism.

And although it was considered a rather aristocratic school there were the usual feuds and bits of jealousy inseparable from a crowd of girls, the days in the main passed delightfully, and now they were all interested in the rehabilitation of Crawford House, the coming of the young midshipman and the lovely mother who at last had an almost miraculous restoration to health and strength.

Crawford House was full of workmen. Aunt Kate was supervisor. Willard was staying with his parents.

The house stood on a little eminence and had two terraces that were a mass of bloom in the summer. A broad portico ran on two sides and at the end fronting the south there was an imposing tower, many windows. Back of it was a flower garden, a vegetable garden, barns, carriage house and a useful little green-house.

"Dear, I hope the workmen will be through

early in December," said Aunt Kate. "Then there is all the furnishing. Only about six weeks. Does school seem natural, Zay? Have the girls gone way ahead of you?"

"I hardly know yet," was the laughing reply. "Mrs. Barrington hasn't really set me at work."

"Are there many new scholars?"

"Not in our department, but it seems nice to be a school girl again and not a globe trotter."

"But you didn't go quite round the world."

"I'm glad there's something left. Look girls, this is my room with the southern and western exposure. I think I'll have it done in pale green and pink, Aunt Kate. That will tone down the summer sunshine. Phil and I have been discussing colors."

"That will be pretty, and you can stand green. It would turn some complexions yellow," returned Aunt Kate.

"How short the days are growing! And it gets dark so soon. Girls, we had better hurry off home."

"Shall I order samples of green, Zaidee?"

"Yes, Aunt Kate, if you please."

It was quite a treat to sit down at the table with a group of girls. Madame Eustice

talked to them in French and Zay surprised her with her readiness and improved pronunciations.

"And I am quite a proficient in German as far as talking goes, I've heard so much of it, and it seemed so funny at first. Though a good many of the servants and waiters speak a little English."

Zay glanced down at the other table. She singled out Miss Nevins who had quite a fancy hair dressing and a pink bow. But she saw no one she thought Miss Boyd. Then there was a full hour to the study period.

Lilian and her mother often took this meal which was only a kind of high tea in their room. Mrs. Boyd could not overcome a half fear of Mrs. Dane. Then she read to her mother until it was time to go to the study. Often she left her mother asleep in the big easy chair. Oh, for some one to listen and to respond! But the practice was good for her if no one listened.

Zay kept glancing furtively down at the table of the younger class. Yes, there was Miss Boyd. She went toward a pupil, as a small hand was held up. There was something interesting in the face, and the young student would glance up and smile. Was

there any resemblance, she wondered? The hair was darker, but the complexion was certainly fine. Miss Nevins had a peevish look tonight and said something rather cross. Miss Boyd preserved her serenity.

Lilian was having quite a delightful new interest in the Trenhams. Her exercise hour led to a walk down there and an engaging half visionary talk with Claire who had wonderful adventures with a pretty squirrel who ran up and down a tree in range with her window. Or it was some belated bird who had lost his way south and had to hide to keep out of the way of the hunters.

"Why do they let them go out and kill the poor birdies?" she asked plaintively. "I should think it would be braver to go to Africa and shoot lions and tigers and those cruel animals that eat up human beings, and the dear pretty little squirrels!"

"Why, indeed?" Lilian had often thought of it herself.

Or it would be a story of a fairy who had a long search for a charmed ring that would bestow a wonderful power over everything in the forest and give the animals the gift of speech. Claire told one, Lilian must take the next.

"Edith comes home so tired sometimes. You are always fresh," the child said.

Then the girl would meet Edith who would turn about and walk with her and listen to the hopes and ambitions and dreams she could tell to no one else. So she had a comforting secret life.

Zaidee Crawford made two or three slight advances, but they were distantly received, and Zay was not used to being rebuffed. She was not much of an analyst and thought Miss Boyd very cold natured. But now and then the enthusiasm of the true student broke out in some class recitation and it transfigured her.

"Our pupil teacher quite distinguished herself today," said Phillipa Rosewald, "though I must say it was in exceedingly bad taste."

"Why bad taste?" asked Zay. "I thought it fine."

"She might have been a little more modest. You see, my dear child, we are not preparing for teachers nor to vulgarly distinguish ourselves. I thought Miss Grayson did not quite like it. Are you really growing fond of your double? But I can't imagine you standing up in that bold fashion."

Zay was silent. It always annoyed her

to have Miss Boyd called her double. The figure and manner was so different. Zay was so light and airy, she seemed rather to skim over space than to walk, and every motion was replete with grace, while Miss Boyd was stately, and when critical eyes were upon her, sometimes seemed awkward.

Miss Nevins certainly was improving. Thanks to Mrs. Barrington's regimen her complexion had cleared up, she kept her hair in a tidier fashion. May Gedney had insisted upon her wearing something beside the dismal browns.

"Send this to your dressmaker and have a green suit trimmed with bands of gray fur—if it won't be too extravagant."

"Oh, father will pay the bill. He hasn't much idea of what things cost."

"See here—I know a lovely dressmaker in Livingston. I sometimes go there. Mrs. Barrington would let us go over with Miss Davis, I am sure, and as she keeps samples we could choose, and she could take your measure. I don't believe it would cost half as much, and will be prettier. Your clothes are too old."

"Oh, you are an angel," and May had to submit to an embrace.

Mrs. Barrington agreed. She gave Miss Nevins some money.

"As they are going on your business you must pay their expenses," she said.

Miss Nevins felt really grand. This was a true friend.

One evening she thrust a note in Lilian's hand. She had taken a seat on the other side of the table.

Lilian read it in her room. She smiled, yet she felt a little hurt after all she had done for Alice.

"I hope you won't feel bad because I changed my seat. Some of those hateful girls called us Beauty and the Beast. I know I am not handsome, but then rich people seldom are, and I don't think you are so very. I have a new dear friend who really does care for me and is going to plan about my clothes. Of course you don't know how the real style ought to dress, and I don't think mamma would like me to be intimate with a girl whose mother was caretaker here. It's such a pity she is, for if she wasn't here you wouldn't need to say anything about it and would be more respected. I hope you won't be mad.—Alice."

"I won't be ashamed of her, poor dear

mother," Lilian said resolutely. But if she were like Mrs. Trenham, and the change would not be so very great, she mused.

Miss Nevins avoided her for the next few days. Lilian did not seem to notice it.

Mrs. Barrington called the girls together one evening.

"Young ladies," she began, "I have a plan to lay before you. There have always been some Hallowe'en plays and tricks that often seem both childish and reprehensible. I am going to propose you lay aside all these and instead let me give you a party with music, dancing and some refreshments. I will invite the young gentlemen of the neighborhood, many of whom you have met at church and elsewhere. What do you say?"

"Oh, Mrs. Barrington, that is utterly lovely."

Phillipa Rosewald sprang up and clasped both hands. There was a bevy of girls about her and they all talked at once.

"Understand, there are to be no tricks played in each other's rooms. You have been making very good progress so far this year and I am sincerely pleased. As many of you will go away on Saturday there can be no

Christmas festivities, but this may be quite as pleasant."

"Oh, Mrs. Barrington, it will be just delightful!" cried Phillipa with enthusiasm. "Thank you a dozen times for thinking of it."

"You have accepted some invitations from outside and it seems the thing to return them. Every girl will be at her liberty to ask one guest and there are several I wish to invite. I hope you will have a happy time."

"Oh, we are sure of that."

"And now I hope your scholarship will be excellent at the winter examinations. It will be the last year for some of you and for your parents' sake I hope you will stand high."

The leisure of the next two days was spent working out lists.

"Oh," declared May Gedney, "I'd like to invite at least four. Ally and Archie Holmes, and the Pridhams. I suppose we can ask a young gentleman?"

"Let us make a list and divide up. Archie Holmes is such a delightful dancer, and Allie is so full of fun, and so many of us were at her birthday party."

"Do you suppose the smaller fry will invite their friends?"

"I think not, though they may be allowed to come in as spectators."

"That Nevins girl is a pretty dancer. What lots of fancy things she knows."

"I don't imagine we will have any high flings," laughing.

"Well, May, you ask Ally, and Nelly White ask Archie. That's the way we must pair off, and divide up the Pridhams. We must only ask one girl in a family. I'm afraid we won't have boys enough to go round."

"Then some of the girls will have to play Knights as we do in the practices."

After much study they presented their list to Mrs. Barrington who thought it very judicious. She said she had several gentlemen to add.

Then there was a time about the frocks. Miss Nevins unpacked two party gowns that had remained in her trunk when it was taken up stairs. A pretty rather simple white cluna silk and a pink satin.

"Oh, the satin is altogether too ornate, too really old," declared Phillipa.

"But it's so much prettier," longingly.

"I don't know about that, and I can tell you Mrs. Barrington will hustle it back in the box mighty quick. The party is for the older

girls. You will simply be allowed in to look and partake of the treat if you are well behaved little girls."

Miss Nevins pouted.

Her new winter suit had come home and it was really admirable, making her look like quite a different girl.

"I don't see what that New York dressmaker can be thinking about. She makes a regular guy of her. And since Mrs. Barrington shut down on so much sweet stuff how her complexion has improved. But the morning baths are a terror to her. She is sure she can keep clean on a wash once a week."

"And girls, every time her mother wrote she enclosed five dollars. She didn't give any account of that for awhile, and Mrs. Barrington was quite affronted when her mother advised her to go to a restaurant now and then to get a good meal. I must say our living here is of the very best."

There was no dissenting voice.

They were all in a gale about the party. There was always a lawn fete when school closed in June at which the girls invited relatives and friends. Hallowe'en had been devoted to tricks in each other's room, sewing up sheets, sprinkling cayenne pepper and rice, and

occasionally putting a toad in the bed if one could be found, or an artificial one would answer the purpose. Mrs. Barrington had made some appeals, but this new plan was a decided success. The girls were gay and eager with delight, and wonder who of the young men of the town would be asked.

Mrs. Barrington called Lilian in her room and spoke of the party, giving her a special invitation.

"It is very kind of you," the girl answered, "and I hope you will not think me ungrateful if I decline. I am not used to gayeties of this kind, and"—with a smile—"I have no party dress."

"That can easily be remedied. I really think you are making a mistake by effacing yourself so readily on all occasions. You are becoming a fine scholar and I am much interested in your welfare. Your hour in the study room is not at all detrimental—"

"There are other things. Oh, Mrs. Barrington let me keep to my own sphere. I have always been poor, I have not been much among what are called better class girls, but I do know they have better advantages and are trained in pretty and attractive society ways. Public schools are more on a level. I am not finding

fault. My heart is full of gladness for this lovely offer that came to my mother and me. Some of the young ladies have been very kind. Believe me I am happy, but I should feel out of place in a gay party."

She looked really beautiful standing there, the bright flush coming and going over her face, her mouth with its winsome curves, her eyes so full of gratitude and candor. What was the elusive remembrance?

"You shall do as you like in this matter," returned Mrs. Barrington. "But at the beginning of the new term I propose to have matters on a somewhat different footing. You will end by being my best scholar."

"Oh, thank you a thousand times for taking so much interest in me. I hope I shall be able to repay you."

"My dear child some of the best things in the world are done without pay. Appreciation is better and you have a great deal of that."

The party was a great success. Several of the older graduates were asked in. There was music, some conversational plays where quick wit was necessary and in this Phillipa excelled. Then the dancing was charming to the young crowd. They were very merry

over the refreshments, then dancing again.

"It's been just delightful! I never had such a good time in my life. Oh, Mrs. Barrington, how can we ever thank you," and a dozen other glad acknowledgments. They were all tired enough to tumble into bed, with no thought of tricks to disturb them.

Miss Nevins admitted that she had a first class time. "Only I wish I had been up in more dances. And if they'd had some fancy dances! I do love them so!"

"Hardly at such a party," said Phillipa, dryly. "And the maid of the evening who did not come. Do you suppose she was asked?" inquired Louie Howe."

"Oh, she would have come quick enough if she'd had anything to wear," subjoined Miss Gedney. "Well, I'm glad she didn't or wasn't. It would have been rather embarrassing."

"When I meet her abroad in the capacity of attendant to some charming young lady I should not know her, of course."

There was a laugh at that.

Then began the mouth of real study though there were a few heart burnings that Miss Boyd should come up to the best in some of the classes.

November was unusually beautiful and the

week of Indian summer a dream for a poet. Lilian's afternoon hour out of doors was the concentration of delight. The handsome town, the picturesque houses, where late blooming flowers were a delight on many a lawn, the peaceful winding river whose shadows seemed to depict a fascinating underworld, the rising ground beyond with its magnificent trees, its tangled nooks of shrubbery with scarlet berries, so stirred Lilian's fine nature that she felt as if she must burst into poesy.

No, she would never give up the splendid, inspiriting dreams of youth. Ambitious and noble natures are often haunted by romantic ideals and glimpses of the future reaching up to unharmful standards that did seem possible. These dreams were better than the feverish, vitiating novels some of the girls poured over in private.

She was making a warm friend of Edith Trenham, who was often puzzled by her. How did she get this wonderful insight into such a beautiful world full of possible endeavor.

The simple prettiness of the Trenham home was very charming to her. This was what she would make for her mother, only there would be a little more. Portfolios of engravings, a vase from Japan, a curious Indian ornament

with ages back of it. Already Barrington House was shaping her taste in many matters.

Then it was a pleasure to talk to the imaginative Claire who reveled in the Knights of Arthur's time, the tastes of Mythology which she twisted about to suit her fancy.

"I like Miss Lilian so much," she would say. "She has traveled in so many countries. She knows all about Eskimo babies and little Chinese girls who can't go anywhere because they have such crooked feet. And we play at going to see them, and they give us such curious things to eat. And there are real little Greek children, who lived in Bible times. Oh, it's just lovely!"

"You make Claire very happy," Edith would say in a fond tone.

"I like to make her happy, and I want to make my mother happy. She has had such a hard life."

"You are a dear daughter."

Was she being a dear daughter to her mother? Mrs. Boyd seemed to grow more distant, more dreary and absent. Sometimes between classes she would run in and take her mother's work, read to her evenings, but then she always fell asleep; but the girl went on. It was more company to read aloud. Just

now she was deep in the making of Beautiful Florence. Oh, would she ever get to know all the famous cities of the world?

How the time sped on! There was one snow storm, not a very deep one, but enough to call out the sleighs, and what a fairyland it made of Mount Morris. Saturday all the girls chipped in and hired a big sleigh and a laughing crew of ten had what they thought the merriest time of their lives.

Just as they were getting out Louie Howe caught her skirt on something and there was a tear.

"Oh, girls! My best Sunday skirt! And we —some of us are invited to Mrs. Westlake's to dinner, and she goes away on Monday. Oh, I wonder if Mrs. Boyd can mend it fit to be seen! I can't take it to the tailors now."

"She darns beautifully."

"Well, that's what she's here for; mender in general."

"But it seems dreadful to ask her to do it in the evening, and the daylight is almost gone."

Louie hated to give up whatever her mind was set upon. She hurriedly changed her frock and put on a light evening dress. With her skirt in hand she crossed the hall. The

door stood open. The house was always warm. Mrs. Boyd sat in an easy chair. Helen on one of the fancy stools under the gas burner with a book in her hand. Louie swept past her.

"Oh, Mrs. Boyd. I want you to mend my skirt. I've given it a dreadful tear. I can't take it to the tailors and four of us are invited out to dinner after church, so I *must* have it."

Mrs. Boyd rose and examined it. "It is a bad tear, but if you must have it—"

"Yes, I surely must. O, I think you can do it. There's the whole evening."

Then she turned away. Lilian's temper flared up at white heat.

"Oh, mother, why didn't you tell her you could not? She has other dresses to wear. Let me take it back to her—"

"No, dear, I'll do it. Light the lamp for me. Why you know that's part of my business," and Mrs. Boyd gave a tremulous little laugh.

"I think Mrs. Barrington would not have such a thing done on Saturday night," was her resolute reply, but she lighted the lamp and brought her mother's work table with its handy cabinet.

"You see a good part of it will go under

this plait. Oh Lilian, do not mind such little things."

The insolent manner had hurt the girl keenly. Louie was on the promotion list and would graduate in June. She held her head very high. Her father had promised her a handsome watch with a beautiful neck chain that could be detached when required and she felt sure of it now.

Mrs. Boyd basted the tear on a piece of cloth and began her work.

"Lilian," she said, "will you go and see if there is an iron on the range, and ask cook if I can come down by and by."

Then she began her work. The underneath part at first, but somehow her hand trembled. Lilian watched with an indignant, aching heart. After awhile her mother leaned back with a sigh.

"I believe I shall have to get glasses," she said wearily. "I cannot do fine work in the evening. I am afraid I shall spoil it, and I've always been such a neat worker."

"Let me finish," said the girl. Every inch of her protested, but it was for her mother's sake. Lately she had done several things to ease her.

"Yes, let me," she went on, taking the work

from her mother's hands. "You know I can darn nicely."

Lilian took infinite pains. It was slow work, but at last it was accomplished.

"You are such a dear, good daughter, and it is said booky people are never anything with a needle, but you could get your living with it."

Then she took her work down stairs and came back flushed and smiling.

"Look, Lilian," in a tone of pride, "it hardly shows! Cook said she never saw more beautiful darning and that in a big city I could make a fortune at lace mending. Will you take it to Miss Howe?"

"No, mother," and Lilian spoke in a dignified but not unkindly manner. "We are not here to run and wait on the girl. Let Miss Howe come for it."

Mrs. Boyd felt disappointed. She wanted some one beside cook to praise her handiwork.

Louie fidgeted about her skirt. She and Zay were in Phil's room talking over the coming Christmas and Mrs. Crawford's return.

"I wonder why that girl doesn't bring my skirt. Maybe they've spoiled it."

"Have you sent a maid?"

"Why no. I meant Miss Boyd. She ought'nt be above such things."

"Still, she isn't here to run on errands. I think Mrs. Barrington treats her quite as if she were a scholar, and she's a fine one, too."

"Some day she'll brag of having been educated here, though Mount Morris doesn't set out to furnish teachers, but the training of young ladies. Mother likes it because there was no opportunity of making undesirable acquaintances," and Louie gave her head a toss.

"Is Miss Nevins so very desirable?" asked Zay with a flash of mirth in her eye.

"Still, if you met her abroad as a rich banker's daughter or heard of her being presented to the Queen—"

"Girls, don't quarrel about either one of them. Alice Nevins is a fool and always will be. Lilian Boyd is smart and ambitious but there *is* the bar sinister. Her mother isn't the sort of person to come up in the world and when Miss Lilian gets there she'll ship off her old mother, put her in an Old Woman's Home. I despise that toss of her head, just as if she was up to the highest mark already; but they are not worth disputing about.

Zaidee Crawford drew a long breath. She

had almost courage enough to stand up for her, then she remembered some one had said you were never sure that some disgraceful thing might come out. Who knew anything about her father? There was a good deal of pride of birth at Mount Morris as is apt to be the case where well to do people have lived for a century or so.

Louie sent a maid for her skirt and admitted that a tailor couldn't have done it better.

"Only a week" the girls said with their good night to each other.

Not that they were so tired of school, but Christmas was a joyous occasion, and going home a treat.

CHAPTER VI

AN ESCAPADE AND WHAT CAME OF IT

The closing week of school was full of girlish excitements. Friday and Saturday most of the girls would go home. Christmas came on the following Monday. The Miss Kirklands were going to remain and devote the time to study. Alice Nevins and Elma Ransome had no homes to go to at present. Mrs. Barrington generally took this for a resting-up time.

Louie rushed into Phillipa's room, breathless and eyes full of wonder. There was some fancy things strewn around. Phil and Zaidee were at some gifts.

"What now? Has there been a mistake in the calendar and is Christmas put off and are we to be aliens from the family bosom?"

Louie laughed and fanned herself vigorously.

"I've been hearing wonderful things about that Clairvoyant. Do you really know what clairvoyance is? It isn't mere fortune telling. Madge Hayne went the other day and she was told some really remarkable things. They had not heard from that brother in a year and didn't know whether he was dead or alive. She said they would hear from him

and that he would return soon with a fortune, and this very morning the letter came. He's been in Alaska and British Columbia and goodness knows where all, and he's tired of rambling and hardships. So he's coming home as he has made his pile, which I suppose means a fortune. They are all just wild with joy, and there are to be two marriages this year."

"Then Madge's lover will get his promotion. That is what she is waiting for," laughed Phil. "But I have heard that the woman told some wonderful things."

"And while we were abroad in the summer Aunt Kate and I took litle tours around; we were at a Fair in a small town where there were some real Romany gypsies and one insisted on reading Aunt Kate's future. She spoke of mamma's walking without crutches, which we couldn't believe and said after we came home something mysterious would happen to us, that a member of the family would come from a great distance, that the person who had her in charge would die, but Aunt Kate laughed and said we had had no mysterious marriages nor sudden disappearances, so that could hardly come true."

Phillipa had been considering. "Girls let's

go," she exclaimed. "Mrs. Barrington didn't actually forbid it. She said: 'Girls I hope none of you will be foolish enough to spend your money on such nonsense. Those people are generally impostors.' I'd like to have a peep into the future. There's a young man I am interested in. Now, if he's all fair and square and means business—"

"You're always on the anxious seat of lovers," said Louie, "and you seem to have them by dozens."

"I want the very best and richest. Girls, my mother was married when she was seventeen, and I'll be nineteen in June; but she didn't go to boarding school for three years and waste her time."

"And I want a tour abroad—a winter or summer in Paris—which is most attractive, and there may be a little chance of some one leaving father a fortune. Oh, let us go—just for the fun if nothing else," and Louie glanced up in her radiant prettiness.

There is something tempting to the young in a peep in the wide mysterious future. Joys and the so-called good luck are delights to hope for and it is seldom that any dark pages are unfolded to youth. So the girls talked and agreed to go the next afternoon.

Examinations were in the morning and the girls had the afternoon to themselves. Four were going to a musicale, half a dozen to do some last shopping.

"We'll put on something out of the ordinary line," said Phil. "Hoods and veils and I'll wear my old gray coat. Mother would make me bring it and I've not had it on once. We'll trot across the park, shortest route, and hold our heads down."

"And then run round to Crawford House and have some hot chocolate," said Zay.

It was a winter when Tam o' Shanters were all the rage. Zay had a white one with two fluffy rose-colored rosettes. As she passed through the hall she saw Clara Arnold's blue one lying on the bed. She had always tabooed blue. Now with a sudden impulse she put it on. Clara had gone to the musicale and would not be home until late. Then she gathered up her curls and stuffed them in the crown. Yes, she did suggest the Boyd girl. The resemblance teased her, and the girls had found that out. She wound a veil around her head and they stole through the hall when it was deserted and went scuddering through the Park.

It was a cloudy afternoon, not one to go out for pleasure, and then everybody had wanted

to go down town. Mrs. Trenham lived in the corner house. There was a garden space between, then a high fence. Phillipa rang the bell.

A rather unkempt, middle-aged woman answered it.

"Could we see the Clairvoyant?"

"Well," hesitatingly. "All of you? I'm rather—yes, walk in."

The room was untidy, the books on the table dusty, and some clothing thrown over several chairs.

"Young girls always want a peep in the future," and she gave an abrupt laugh. "You don't any of you look as if you needed medical advice. My, I seldom see such rosy, good looking girls. Now, I'll tell you—it's a dollar if I go into a trance and see you inside, up and down and I can tell to a T whether there's anything the matter. But I don't believe you want that. S'pose I just run over the cards and see what kind of a Christmas you're going to have and how many lovers and who's going to wear a diamond. That's fifty cents."

"That's enough to spend on such foolery," laughed Phillipa.

She pushed out some chairs and took up a

pack of cards, threw them aside and took a clean pack off of the mantlepiece. "Now you try first," motioning to Phillipa. "Why I can see by your face there's lots of fortune coming to you. You're the kind of girl men quarrel over."

She had become a very astute reader of faces and could tell by the brightening of an eye or the movement of a feature whether she was on the right tack.

"Your home isn't here and you are going to it in a few days. You see—here's the house and there's a distance between," pointing out the cards. "They are making a big time and lots of company, a great Christmas dinner, and a dance in the evening, and you'll get kissed under the mistletoe—but you won't marry that man. There's two of them—three of them and two offers of marriage. Some one you haven't seen much of, and there'll be talk of a diamond."

She shuffled the cards and ran over them again, enlarging upon the lovers and jealous girls as well as men, presents and fun. "But you're going to turn your back on it all and you don't want to a bit, and you're going to have some trouble, and a journey with a trunk, and—why you'll be in school and you'll

be most crazy to hear from the young man with the diamond, but you just keep your faith, he'll be all right and there'll be a wedding before the leaves fall. Oh, you'll be as happy as a queen."

Phillipa laughed and nodded.

"Now, you next," to Zaidee.

Zay hesitated, but took the chair Phillipa vacated.

At first she seemed a puzzle to the fortune teller. "She had traveled a good deal. Some one was coming across water that she would be glad to see—three people, a fair lady who had had a great deal of trouble, sickness, but was well now. Why they would soon be here and all have Christmas dinner together. There would be a great surprise with a fair young man who cared a great deal for her, and there were wonderful surprises that wouldn't make her happy at first. Here was a strange girl—but she doesn't want to come. Gifts and friends, and this stout man—your father," and she knew by Zay's face she had guessed right. "He is very fond of you—oh, you needn't ever be afraid any one will crowd you out. Plenty of lovers, too, when it comes your time; a happy marriage and children, and prosperity. A little sickness, but nothing to be alarmed about.

Louie's fortune did not seem so serene. "She was at school and would go home to keep Christmas. This was elaborated in very agreeable styles. Then she would come back, but she would be troubled about a prize, be disappointed in a girl friend who would try to injure her and who would say mean things, but she must not mind them. Then there were journeys and pleasures and lovers, but she would not marry very young and would be engaged twice, and oddly enough be married the second time."

Then they rose, gathered up their wraps and the fortune teller her money, with profuse wishes for their happiness and a merry Christmas, and shut the door. Zay was leading and opened the hall door, stepping out on the stoop.

"Oh, my goodness! There's the Dane across the way! Let us run out back and across lots" and they started in a huddle, opening the door that led to another room.

"You can't come in here," declared a voice but they pushed through to the outer door, flew down the path and across a space over to the next street, but did not stop until they had reached the side gate to Crawford House.

"It's only three of us girls," exclaimed Zay. "We are going to my room."

Then they stood in breathless terror, looking in each other's faces. Phillipa gave a half hysterical laugh, dropped into a chair and went on laughing.

"I don't see anything funny," said Louie. "And to come so near being caught! Do you suppose the Dane was watching out—suspecting? And that horrid smell in the room, and the girl holding up one of those boys who was struggling for breath—"

"You had a good view, Louie," sarcastically.

"Well, I was behind. Oh, what if it was small pox?" and Louie was white as a ghost.

"Small pox! Louie don't be an idiot! See here, we'd heard a thing like that quick enough. Now I'll tell you—Zay have you any aromatic ammonia? Let's all take a dose to quiet our nerves and ward off whatever it may be, and get a lump of gum camphor to take to bed with us tonight, and Louie if you dare to act suspicious I'll murder you."

"I don't think it was just the thing for her to let us in if there was any sickness."

"I wanted a *real* Clairvoyant. They do tell you wonderful things, but she hit a good deal about you, Zay. I wonder who is coming to

try to oust you out? Oh, maybe your brother will bring home a wife."

"I shouldn't like that," the girl said frankly. "And maybe he will be sent on a three years' cruise and leave her with us!"

"Nonsense! Don't bother your pretty curly head. Here let us all take our composing draught and then wend our way to school with a bold front. Only we must have some other hats."

"I'll wear my Gainsborough, and you, Phil, shall have my brown turban with the bunch of plumes. Louie—"

"Let me wear the black straw with those yellow daisies. I almost grudge that to you."

"Then take it as a Christmas gift."

The cook stopped them in the hall and said they must have a cup of hot chocolate. The wind was blowing up cold.

Then they started home in very good spirits. It was well they had changed their headgear. Mrs. Dane sat in the hall looking over some mail. She glanced up and nodded, but she had some suspicions and she meant to see who came home wearing a light blue Tam.

Zay flung her borrowed article on Miss

Arnold's bed. She had not come home from the musicale yet.

Lilian Boyd had gone out for her usual walk. She wanted to see some pretty things Claire was making for Christmas, but before she reached the corner she saw Edith Trenham coming rapidly from her mother's, so she halted.

"Oh, Lilian—don't go. You can't see Claire—"

"Is she ill?" in affright.

"No, no, only—come with me to the druggist; I can't tell you just now—oh, I'll write you a note. You cannot go there this week. Mother has a friend staying with her and I have gone to Mrs. Lane's to board for a week, there is so much school work just now."

"How very mysterious you are," studying her while she colored under the scrutiny.

"Well, it threatens snow and it would be easier for me there. Don't worry about us—I'll write this evening and tell you the 'whys;' and now dear, don't feel vexed if I leave you. I have a number of errands to do, and I'll surely see you on Sunday."

She had taken a few steps, then she turned and said: "Lilian, do not mention meeting

me today; I ask it as a favor. I will explain it all to you. Trust me."

What did it mean? *Was* Claire ill? She had never seen Miss Trenham so confused. Evidently she could not have her come to the house. Lilian felt curiously dismal. There were the shops in holiday attire, but she said she did not feel joyous, Christmasy. She rambled about a little. There was the Clairvoyant's sign. Could any one tell about the future, even another's health? For, somehow it seemed as if her mother had been curiously distraught of late. If she *could* know about the future! Oh, her mother must live the year out, and she was learning a great many things. She would do for an under teacher then, and by the time she was twenty—

It was cloudy and raw and she hurried up a little. A merry group of girls passed her laughing and chatting. Why, she had never felt so alone, not even back in Laconia. Last Christmas had been gay and pleasant with girls in Sunday and every-day school.

She went in at the side entrance. She could have taken the other but this was nearer. She had the right to a good many privileges that under some circumstances she would have claimed, but the supercillious nod or the lifting

of the brows cut like a knife. Her place was on her mother's side.

Mrs. Dane opened her door on the landing and crossed the hall.

"Oh, you have returned. Did you see your friend, Miss Trenham?" There was something curious in the tone.

"I did not go to the house." Yet she colored as if it was a prevarication.

"No?" was all the comment in the same tone.

But her mother was not so easily put off.

"Did you see your pretty invalid friend and her Christmas work?"

"No, I did not go in."

"That's queer. I thought you were going there. Where, then, did you go?"

"Oh, I only walked around and said over French verbs. It's grown very chilly."

"Yes. Miss Arran came in and opened a window. I felt so cold—I wish people would let you have your room as you want it. They can swing their's wide open if they want to."

She was lying on the bed. She looked old and gray and wrinkled.

"Do you feel poorly, mother?"

"No, not when I am good and warm."

"Shall we have tea together here?"

"I don't want any, I'm very comfortable now. You go and get yours."

But Lilian sent for it, yet she could not persuade her mother to taste the toast or the bit of broiled steak. She was hungry.

Afterward she took up her book to study as she was not due down stairs. Then there was a tap at the door.

"Mrs. Barrington would like to see you in her room," was the message.

She walked thither. Mrs. Dane sat there in her austerest fashion.

"Miss Boyd," she said, "were you at your friend's, Mrs. Trenham's, this afternoon?"

Lilian flushed at the repeated question.

"I was not," she said rather hesitatingly. "I meant to go, but"—then she paused. She must not say she met Edith.

Mrs. Barrington's penetrating eyes were fixed on her face and brought a vivid color to it.

"Were you at any other person's house?"

"No, I was not," she answered quietly. Oh, what does it all mean?

"Do you mean to deny that you were at the Clairvoyant's from half past four to about five?" Mrs. Dane said in her most judicial manner.

Lilian flushed indignantly but her voice was unsteady as she said—"I was not there, if you"—then she paused.

"Think again. I saw you walking about nearly at the corner. I went to make a call on a friend who is ill. When I came out I walked a few doors, when I saw the Clairvoyant's door open and a girl stepped out on the stoop. I think there was some one behind her. She saw me and bolted back in the hall. There are just two girls in the school who have light blue Tams. Miss Arnold went to a musicale and found hers lying on the bed just where she left it. I watched, but you did not come out again. Then I walked around to the rear but saw no one. I had a fair glance at your face, I think I cannot be mistaken."

Lilian was speechless with amazement.

"I met Miss Trenham at the side of the park and we walked together a short distance, Believe it or not, I went to no one's house."

"It is important for us to know the truth on account of the terrible ending," said Mrs. Barrington gravely. "Two boys have been ill with what their mother thought was measles. The doctor was not sent for until noon, and did not get there until nearly six. He found

one boy dead of malignant scarlet fever, the other dying and one girl seriously ill. So you see we cannot afford to have contagion brought in the house!"

"Oh, what a horrible thing!" Lilian cried. Then she faced Mrs. Dane. "Oh, you *are* mistaken, as God hears me, I was not in that house nor on that side of the street," and she almost gasped for breath.

"You may go to your room. You will be excused from study hour tonight. We must consider. I am glad it is so near closing time."

Lilian felt like one dazed. Yet she was passionately indignant when she had reached her room. There might be other blue Tams in the town but she did not remember to have seen many in light blue except Miss Arnold's. Somehow, Mrs. Dane had never taken to her cordially like Miss Arran and the teachers.

Mrs. Barrington was much distressed. She had become warmly interested in Lilian. She had smiled a little over Mrs. Dane's strictures.

"There's something about her, a sort of loftiness that doesn't belong to her life, though she takes things with outward calmness, but I have a feeling that some day she will break out in anawful tempest, and I doubt her being that woman's daughter. Mrs. Boyd never

talks frankly about her," Mrs. Dane said, severely.

"But she *is* devoted to the poor mother."

"Well, it seems so," rather reluctantly.

After dinner Mrs. Barrington summoned Miss Arran and laid the matter before her. She listened with a kind of terrified interest.

"I can't believe Miss Boyd would tell such a dreadful falsehood, when she saw the necessity of the truth. Mrs. Dane has very strong prejudices. That Nevins girl is about her size and has a long braid of fair hair."

"Oh, she was in disgrace in her room, but what a horrible thing that it should have gone on without even a physician, or any care to prevent the spread of contagion. Well—I suppose tomorrow it will be all over town. I I gave Matthew strict orders to say nothing about it tonight."

Presently Mrs. Barrington knocked at Mrs. Boyd's door. Lilian opened it. She had been crying. Now she stretched out her hands imploringly.

"Oh, Mrs. Barrington you cannot believe I would tell you such a cruel, willful falsehood! I was not even very near that house. After all your kindness to me—"

"There, dear, I believe *you*. I know there

has been some mistake. Mrs. Dane has always been so anxious, one might say jealous for my welfare, and you see this would mean a great deal to me. You must pardon her until the truth comes out."

"Oh, thank you a thousand times," cried Lilian in broken tones, her eyes suffused with tears.

"You need not come down to the study this evening. How is your mother?"

"She is having a lovely sleep."

"Do not say anything to her, and the girls will be going away before there is any real fright. I do not anticipate any danger with us. Be comforted. We shall hear all to-morrow."

Lilian was almost happy. She had not lost her dear friend. Under any other circumstances Lilian would have given Mrs. Barrington an unreasoning adoration. She could not define it to herself. She liked Miss Arran, but this was beyond a mere kindly liking.

"She believes in me, she believes in me," and the girl poured the fragrant balm on her wounded heart. But there seemed an awful undefined fear.

CHAPTER VII

A SUPREME MOMENT

The girls in the study were looking furtively at one another. Was this a sort of surprise to be sprung upon them?

"Oh, Miss Marsh, do you know what this means? I can't make beginning or middle out of it. Why doesn't Miss Boyd come?"

"Yes, where is airy fairy Lilian? I think some other life she must have been a soundless ghost. You look up and she is there. Then she disappears."

"I'm glad some of the girls will have to stay through vacation," said Alice Nevins. "It will be awful poky, I wish I could go to New York and the theatre every night."

"Every other night would do for me," said Phillipa, and here I've two French exercises to go over. One has five errors—blunders, and the other three. Madame Eustice wants to go at twelve tomorrow. Miss Vincent do take pity on me when you go to Paris. I've heard it said you can't talk it until you've studied it all over again. Oh, what's the use of so much weariness of heart and brain!"

No one came. Then in girl fashion they stirred up a sort of gale, saying funny things

and making droll misquotations, or putting the wrong name to others and wondering what would be in the Christmas stockings.

"I must leave a pack behind to be darned up. I hope I'll get two boxes of new ones. Girls, you wouldn't dare offer your old ones to Miss Boyd, would you? I have some pretty ones and those plaited silk. They wear better than real silk. Mother thinks they're good enough for school."

"I don't suppose Miss Boyd has any relatives. It would be rather tough not to have *any* gifts. Girls, oughtn't we chip in—"

"No, we ought not," replied Phil, decisively. "The maid and the laundress are the only ones I remember at Christmas. Mrs. Barrington has sensibly forbidden the giving of tips, and since we don't pretend to be friends it would be a bad precedent."

"Miss Boyd is an excellent scholar," said Miss Vincent.

"If she couldn't learn something higher she might as well stay on the lower rounds," sneered some one. "They relegate these things better in England. A housemaid's daughter is generally a housemaid."

"I think I have heard of people coming up

from the ranks in favored England," was the dry rejoinder.

"Oh, let's let her alone. She'll make her way with that high head of hers. Perhaps she will be President of some college yet."

Then they went back to fun. At nine Miss Arran came in and dismissed them.

Zay was thinking how solitary the girl must be. Oh, if her mother were not the general mender! Even if she were a sort of charity scholar! And she was going to have such a splendid Christmas. Her dear, beloved mother able to get about by herself, and all the rest of their lives to be such friends, to go abroad together, to visit picture galleries, points of interest and compare notes. For Mrs. Crawford had been finely educated and even the prospect of being an invalid for life had not made her relax her hold on intellectuality. She had been a delightful friend to her boys and they were proud enough of her, but Zay would always be her supreme darling.

Some of the last exercises and conditions were marked off the next day. Madame Eustice and two of the girls went home. A box came for Miss Nevins and the girls thronged around at her invitation while Nat drew out

the nails that had fastened it securely, and lifted out a lighter box.

"That's from Madame I know, and I have frocks enough here for winter. Oh, that's a splendid fruit cake, and nuts and that's candied orange and a box of fruit, and this is some sort of jewelry."

She tore off the wrapping eagerly. A long *lapis lazuli* chain with a beautiful pendant and links of exquisite color, and a pair of bracelets to match.

"It's elegant," pronounced Phillipa. "I never go crazy over it myself and it seems too old for a girl; the sort of thing for a dowager to wear on state occasions. Now, let us see the frock."

A beautiful, fine albatross cloth initself appropriate, but betrimmed with pipings of satin and lace.

"Why it looks like a wedding gown. You'll have to save it for there will be no occasion to wear it here. Not even graduation and the lawn fete, for then we all wear simple white muslin. That is Mrs. Barrington's law."

"Oh, dear, and it is so beautiful!" on a half cry. "You see, mamma thought being a high-up school there would be parties and all that. Last winter in New York I went to three and

oh, you should have seen the dresses! I had one of blue gauze over thin satin and it was just lovely, and the dancing was simply great, and here you never go any where."

"We come here to improve our minds," said some one sententiously

"I'd like some real fun and gayety, and think that I must stay all alone here."

"There will be five girls to keep you company."

"But there's no fun or parties or anything. Oh, let's cut the cake. I shan't enjoy it when I am alone."

It was a real treat, and the nuts and sweets were a feast. They had not much appetite for luncheon.

"But did you ever see anything so idiotic as that lovely frock for such a girl and a place like this where you do not go to high-up parties," said one of the girls in a group, afterward. "And what it must have cost! It really ought to be returned as very unsuitable."

"What can the mother be like, and isn't the father a politician or a contractor?" with a laugh.

"No," returned Phillipa. "I asked father to find out about them. Mr. Nevins is a

reputable banker, a very good judge of loans and is rated quite highly in London. Then he buys curios and pictures, so he must have some taste. Think what that silly girl will have, enough to make any three girls of us fancy ourselves heroines of the Arabian Nights; but the mother can't have any sense."

"I think the modistes are largely to blame. No doubt the mother ordered a handsome evening dress, and the woman made it handsome and expensive and quite useless. You don't see Zay Crawford with any such things!"

"Zay is beauty unadorned."

"And Miss Nevins is ugliness intensified. I am really sorry for her, though she has improved a very little. But when you think of the place she might take in society—"

"And the journeys!"

"Still, I wouldn't want such a mother.'

Phillipa went to her room to finish her Latin verses.

"Though why you should be compelled to write Latin verses when you can't make decent English rhymes I don't see," she grumbled.

She was almost through when the door flew open and shut again with a bang and Louie Howe threw herself on the floor clasping

Phillipa's knees, her eyes distraught with terror.

"Oh, isn't it horrible!" she almost shrieked. "Those boys had malignant scarlet fever! That one was dying the girl held up, he was choking awfully, and at nine o'clock the other one died. It's all in the morning's paper. I think they hid it away. Miss Vincent picked it up in the library. Oh, what can we do?"

"You can stop screaming and get up." Phillipa fairly dragged her up and shook her violently. "Hush! hush!" she commanded. "You'll have the whole faculty in here, and we'll be bundled out bag and baggage. Have a little regard for Zay and me if you have none for yourself."

Phillipa drew up the willow rocker and pushed Louie in it. "Don't have hysterics if that is what you're aiming at or I'll douse you with cold water until you're half drowned."

Louie was sobbing now. "I can't help it, and think of the dreadful risk we ran! That woman ought to be sent to prison."

"That woman was going on with her business, earning her living. We were the fools! How did they know it was scarlet fever?"

"Well, she thought it was measles and was doctoring them, but one of them grew so much

worse she sent for Dr. Lewis and he was so busy he didn't get there until five, just as the boy died, and the other one hadn't seemed so bad, but he died at nine, and the youngest girl has the fever. Dr. Lewis sent for the undertaker right away and they put something on the bodies and sealed up the coffin and they were to be buried this morning and the clothes to be burned and the house fumigated. Oh, isn't it horrible! The woman ought to go to prison."

"After losing her two children?"

"Well, to give us all scarlet fever, malignant scarlet fever?" with emphasis.

Phillipa was quivering in every nerve. But she *must* control Louie.

"Well, we shouldn't have gone there. I think she ought not have let us in but just said she couldn't admit customers. Now, what are you going to do?"

"I—I—what *can* I do? I s'pose I'll have scarlet fever—"

"You can give the thing away and be sent home in disgrace. You'll lose your watch and perhaps not get in another school. You can spoil Zay Crawford's life for the present, just

when it has reached the loveliest point of all—

"And you?"

Louie stopped sobbing and studied her companion in wonder.

"I'm not going to have scarlet fever. Those children haven't been sick a week. Scarlet fever is taken from the little flakes that peel off when the skin begins to dry up. We surely didn't get any of those. We went right out in the fresh air and I breathed in a big supply, the room had been so close. Two of mother's children had scarlet fever and she took care of them. None of the others had it. It's half fright; just pull yourself together and don't be an idiot and you'll come through all right."

"Oh, Phil! I wish I had your courage."

"You have courage enough only you won't use it. Just feel certain nothing is going to happen and you'll come out all right. We're going home so soon that for our sakes you might summon a little courage. If you go on this way Louie you'll be—what is it they call hysterical people? Neurasthenics, I believe. I mean to have a jolly good time with plenty of lovers and dances and fun and get

married. I'm not going to be a sighing, whimsical old maid, borrowing trouble."

"Oh, dear!" and she fell to sobbing again.

"Now, Louie, let me give you some ammonia and you lie here on my bed while I finish this exercise. Get asleep if you can."

"Oh, how good you are in real trouble, Phil."

"Humph! You don't know what real trouble is. To be smashed up in a railroad accident or run over by a trolley or bitten by a mad dog, such things might make your hair turn white. There now, don't let me hear another word out of you."

She settled Louie on her bed and covered her over with a shawl, listening every few moments. The sighing breath became more regular, there were two or three gentle snores. Phillipa rose presently, went cautiously to the door and placed the key on the outside, then locked it softly. Louie might sleep half an hour.

Just as she turned Zay ran into her arms. "Oh Phil—we've just had word. The steamer will be in this evening. Aunt Kate has sent over and I am to be dismissed. We go to New York tomorrow morning. Oh, it seems too blessed to be true, but mother hasn't lost any

ground. What a lovely Christmas we shall have!"

"And I'm glad enough for your sake, Zay. I've teased you about looking like that Boyd girl, and I dragged you off into danger, but if anything should happen to you I never could forgive myself."

"I don't believe we were in any great danger. I hunted up father's big medico-something and read about scarlet fever. You don't take it very easily, but oh, wasn't it dreadful for the poor woman! Only I think she oughtn't have let us in. The town authorities are going to send them away as soon as they can. Oh, good-by—but I'll see you when we come back."

"I'll keep tab on Louie. We must just hold together. It won't do for the thing to leak out. I was a ninny to propose such a thing. They kissed each other and walked down stairs together. Most of the girls were in the school room discussing the newspaper account. The town was clean and in excellent shape, there were no fears of an epidemic and even now Dr. Lewis was not quite sure but it's origin was measles, since the little girl had a decided case. The strictest watch would be kept. The clothes and some rubbish had been

burned. The clairvoyant's knowledge of the future was held up to withering ridicule.

Louie Howe had a long, refreshing nap and woke up in much better heart. The short day ended by a little gymnasium practice but all the girls were rather nervous over the affair.

"Why, I had the scarlet fever once," announced Miss Nevins, "and mamma would have three doctors!"

"And you lived through all that?" laughed some one. "Then scarlet fever can't be dangerous."

"I don't remember being very sick, and then father sent us to Bermuda. It was when the lilies were in bloom. It's such a lovely place!"

"Young ladies," began Mrs. Barrington as they rose from the table, "as our work is about done I have decided to dismiss school. Some of your parents may see this sensational account, and everything does get so exaggerated. There is not the slightest fear of an epidemic, but you will all be glad of a little longer holiday. I hope you will all return in good health and the resolve to do your best towards finishing your year in the best possible manner."

"You believe there isn't real danger?" asked Miss Kingsland.

"There have been no cases about the town to indicate an epidemic. The little girl's case seems to be not very serious as her fever is abating. Oh, I think we at least need not feel the slightest alarm. We have no slums to foster contagion."

Still, the two sudden deaths had created a frightened sort of impression. The girls kept discussing them until Phillipa protested.

"Who is going home tomorrow?" she asked. "After all it is only a day sooner, and who has their Christmas gifts done up? Must we save our jolliness until we get home? We are all coming back in a fortnight, and spring comes so soon after the holidays, and there's pegging away at everything and finally graduation."

Some began to hunt up trains, others went to packing. Phillipa kept Louie near her and made funny unsentimental speeches until the old feeling seemed quite restored. Some gifts were exchanged, some guesses as to what home presents would be and they said good-night in the best of spirits.

"Now, Louie," began Phil, escorting her to her door, "if you get a granny fit in the night and see horrible things, you just come to my

room and hop into bed with me, and think what a gay time you'll be having tomorrow night this time, much gayer than Miss Nevins with all her money and her three party frocks with no place to display them."

Louie laughed. "Oh, Phil, you're such a comfort," she said with an extravagant hug, "but aren't you going home tomorrow?"

"No, not until Friday. I want to see Zay before I go, and I'm not afraid of unlucky Friday either," laughing.

Louie slept soundly and was in very good spirits. The girls were all eager for the morning paper. The scare was pretty well over. The boys had been buried, the little girl was no worse and if fever did not develop it would simply be a case of measles.

Then most of the girls said good-by, wishing each other a merry Christmas. The others huddled together and bewailed their hard lot, missing Miss Boyd very much. Her mother was quite poorly, which was given as her excuse. Mrs. Dane insisted upon a rigorous exclusion until all danger of contagion was over.

Quite late in the afternoon Phillipa walked over to Crawford House and sent up her card to Zaidee with a penciled message. The girl came flying through the hall, more beautiful

than ever Phil thought, in her soft red cashmere with white lace garnishings.

"Oh, Phil dear, I'm so glad to see you! I was afraid you would go home before I had a glimpse of you. We've been so busy and so full of joy! Oh, you can't think what it is to see mother walking around with no crutches and the wheel chair set aside, and she's in such splendid spirits. Vincent will be allowed to come home as a special favor to papa, getting here early Monday morning and returning that night. We're just going to have a family dinner with a very few dear friends, but New Year's night I am to have a party. Oh, can't you come back a little sooner. I'd like so to have you."

"I don't believe I can, and you know there are the lovers and the diamond ring"—laughing.

"Oh, dear! *Can* you believe any of it? And the surprise that I'm not going to be pleased with. It isn't that Willard has fallen in love, he is going to have his three years' cruise first. Oh, were you *much* frightened, Phil? It was dreadful, and no one can tell where the boys took the disease. I can't help feeling sorry for the poor mother if she is

a humbug, it is such a sad Christmas for her, and was Louie much frightened?"

"Oh, she almost went into hysterics and I was afraid she'd give us all away, but I did manage to get her off safely, and bound her by the most solemn promises not to mention the escapade at home. It wasn't the right thing for us to do of course, but mischief always looks so tempting to you and if we keep silence no harm will be done. It wasn't as bad as they thought."

A shudder went over Zay's slight figure.

"And I am so glad you didn't worry yourself ill," Phillipa rejoined with real feeling.

"Phil, can't you stay to dinner and see mother? She's lying down now—there have been so many calls. Father brought home the German nurse, who measures off her time in a very funny manner, and he escorts mother down stairs and up again as if he was a young lover."

"No, dear, thank you. When I come back the rush will be over and we will have a good time. I've twenty things to do and start at nine tomorrow. Good-by and have just the most splendid time, as I shall have. So good luck for a fortnight," and they kissed each other warmly.

CHAPTER VIII

A STRANGE CONFESSION

The girl who had been wrongfully accused was not so light hearted. Mrs. Dane still preserved her suspicious aspect, and of course the whole school was eager for every bit of news. Lilian said nothing to her mother about the talk, she seemed rather fretful and uneasy, as if she was annoyed by the girl's presence.

So on Thursday afternoon she went out for a walk. Just beyond the gate she saw Edith Trenham coming toward her.

"Oh, were you going out? Let us walk together, then. I have so much to say to you? Did you think it queer?"

"I know now," said Lilian. "It was dreadful!"

"I had to go home for some important school papers, and just slipped in and out again when you saw me. Of course I did not want it spoken of. Mother has been very careful keeping the windows on that side of the house closed. Claire has never had any of the infantile diseases. The woman thought it measles at first, but they are so particular in the schools, now. We closed today. Moth-

er is going to shut up the house for awhile and board at Mrs. Lane's while they fumigate and burn up. The authorities have ordered the old house torn down. I think not a great many people visited her, though they did at first. I only hope the little girl will not die. Mother spoke to the oldest one that morning and she said her brothers were very ill and that her mother thought she would have a doctor, but it was too late when he came. Oh, I hope there will not be any more cases."

"It would be terrible if they died like that. Our classes are dismissed as well, I believe there was a great fright among the girls, and just at Christmas time, too."

"Will you go down with me tomorrow and have a look at the stores? This has upset our plans. I wanted you and your mother to come and take Christmas dinner with us."

"Mother doesn't seem at all well. I doubt if she could go out, and I couldn't leave her for pleasure."

"Well, some other time; and how are you getting along? I suppose you have vacation as well?"

"Oh yes. Madame thinks I shall acquire French easily. She reads French verses so splendidly, and I am doing well in Latin, but

oh, there are such stores of reading! It is a hardship to tear myself away, and poetry just enchants me—well, when it is high and fine. I have begun 'The Idyls of the King.' Oh it must be just glorious to write such poetry!"

"It is a rare gift, and it is something to be able to read and appreciate."

"I sometimes envy the girls who have so much leisure, yet they seem not to improve it. But then—oh, you don't know how lovely it is here, how much there is to interest and satisfy. Of course I'm not *quite* satisfied at present," and Lilian gave a light laugh, "but the town is so truly beautiful and the house—I wonder if it is silly but I walk about at times and do enjoy the soft rugs, the handsome furniture, the pictures, the beautiful bits of art scattered around, and oh, the books! There never was anything like it in my life before, and if I go back to comparative poverty, which I suppose I shall some day, for I never can earn any thing like this, it will linger in my mind as a journey to some enchanting place. There is so much to learn all the time. Not merely out of books but the sweet and gracious things one can do; Mrs. Barrington is so lovely. Am I tiring you with these visionary things?"

"No, my dear girl, I am glad you can enjoy them and treasure them up without a feeling of envy. We cannot all of us abound in this world's goods, but we can be glad someone has them and is willing to share them with us, at least, allow us to look on."

"I'm going to study every day and get on as fast as possible. I'm longing for the time when I can earn money and have a little home of our own. I wish"—then she paused and recovering herself after a moment, resumed—"I wish to make some nice friends in my own walk in life, among those who really love to work and bring about results."

"And I am sure you will do it. And loving whatever is fine and true and gracious shapes one's character. God has given us the sense of enjoyment and he means us to make the best use of it that we can. Oh, we must turn about. See how far we have walked, and there is a baby crescent moon."

The dun white of the sky was thinning into blue and here and there a star pricked through. It was clear and crisp yet the air had a fragrance of the cedars and spruces. They hurried along, and Lilian promised to meet her friend tomorrow for another walk. She had never been an effusive girl, but she could talk

so easily to Edith and in the interchange she could throw off the things that annoyed or depressed her.

So they said good-night and she entered the pretty vestibule where she had first seen Mrs. Barrington. Her heart gave a quick bound as she thought of that lady's confidence in her truth. Mrs. Dane must sometime be convinced of her injustice.

She ran lightly up the stairs, wondering a little that her mother's room should be in darkness. Crossing over to the match safe she stumbled over something on the floor and struck a light in half terror.

"Oh mother! mother!" she cried to the prostrate figure. Then in sudden fear she called in the hall—"Oh, will some one come! I cannot tell what has happened to mother."

Miss Arran answered. The face was deadly white and cold, the eyes half open, staring.

"Oh, she is dead! I went out to walk and staid too long." Lilian's voice was full of remorseful pathos.

"No," said Miss Arran. "I think she has only fainted. Her heart beats a little; Let us lay her on the bed and I'll get some restoratives. Is she accustomed to fainting?"

"Not like this. Oh poor mother!"

They laid her on the bed, chafed her hands and bathed her face, using the lavender salts. After a little there was a faint respiration. Then she opened her eyes and murmured something.

"Mother, dear, what happened? And I was away." "It will be better when—when I'm gone." The vague glance seemed to study the girl with poignant anguish. "Oh, yes!—better—"

"You must not say that. You must live to let me repay you for all you have done for me, and we will be happy—"

She moved her head from side to side in dissent. "Oh, you do not know, but I did it for love's sake. I could not live without my child."

"Suppose we get her undressed, she will feel more comfortable. She has not looked well for the last week or two. Mrs. Barrington was speaking about it, but she is such a quiet body."

Lilian opened the bed. She was girlishly glad her mother's night dress was neat and lace trimmed, fit to go to her new home. So they soon had her easier and restful.

"I should like a cup of tea," she said, weakly.

"I'll get it," and Miss Arran left the room.

"Dear mother," and Lilian patted the hands that were thin and cold.

"Oh, love me a little to the end, I've loved you so much. Whatever comes you will know I did it for love's sake, and you must forgive."

"There can be nothing to forgive. You have worked for me early and late. You must live and let me repay you, make you happy. If I have failed in the past I will try with all my soul and strength in the future. Think, every year brings us nearer the home I shall make for you. Oh, do not talk of dying!"

"You don't know. I did not think of the wrong then. You were a motherless babe, then, and I was a childless mother. For you must know, you must have felt in your inmost soul that I was not your true mother."

Lilian raised her head in the wildest dismay, and though she stared at Miss Arran she did not seem to see her. Many a time like a lightning flash the thought had swept over her, but it seemed awful to have it put in words, to have the certainty pierce through her like a sharp sword.

"Oh, mother, you do not know what you are saying. It is some wretched, horrid dream! You have been too much alone. You have

brooded over this thought of our differences. Children and parents are often unlike. At all events I have never known any other mother. You must live and let me prove a true daughter."

"I did not think there could be any wrong then. If you were cast on the world friendless, why should I not fill my aching heart with baby love. Yes, you did love me then, you clung to me. I never thought of there being someone else—a father, perhaps—oh, heaven help us both!"

She had raised herself soon after she began to talk; now she fell back on the pillow fainting. Lilian was sobbing. Miss Arran came to her relief.

"I think we must have a physician. I will see Mrs. Barrington.

The faint was of short duration. Miss Arran was strangely mystified. Was Mrs. Boyd's talk an hallucination or some secret kept for years that must needs make its way out at last? Had she any right to repeat it on mere suspicion?

Mrs. Barrington sent for Dr. Kendricks at once. Then she went to Mrs. Boyd's room. How very frail she looked.

"My poor child," the lady said, "this is very

hard for you, and I think you did not come in to dinner. Suppose you go down stairs for awhile?"

"Oh, no, I must stay here. Poor mother—"

"Lilian," murmured the feeble voice and the thin hand wandered out as if for a clasp.

She took it, pressed it to her lips, her firm, warm cheek. Should she pray for life? Would not God send what was best? Oh, that she might have strength to accept it. She raised her eyes to Mrs. Barrington in entreaty. Oh, who was she so like at that moment?

The doctor was announced. Miss Arran sat by the bedside. There was a lamp on the table and he asked that it might be lighted, making a close survey of the patient.

"Was there any shock? Her vitality is at a very low ebb. When was the first unconscious spell?"

"I was out," began Lilian, tremulously. "She insisted that I should go and seemed to want to be alone. I staid longer than I meant, and found her fallen to the floor—"

Mrs. Boyd raised to a partly sitting posture and looked up with feverish eagerness.

"I went to put something in the chiffonier—you will find it, Lilian, in a box and the key is—oh, what did I do with it?"

"Never mind, dear," in a soft tone.

"But *you* must mind, and then I turned—it was my leg. It is heavy and I can't raise it, but the ache is all gone."

Dr. Kendrick turned down the blanket and examined the limb, nodding as if convinced.

"Oh," she cried, "is it paralysis? Then it will not be long. My mother had two strokes a week apart, her mother never rallied from the first, I'm tired—worn out, and Lilian will be better off without me. She may find—I have written it all out—it's there in the drawer—"

"Oh mother!" Lilian kissed her and put her back on the pillow where she gave a gasping sigh.

Dr. Kendrick beckoned Mrs. Barrington out of the room.

"She is in a very low condition and I doubt if she survives more than a few days. What about the girl—*is* it her daughter?"

"Why, yes—though they are very dissimilar; but she is a devoted daughter. The mother is caretaker, the daughter a student."

"She seems to have exhausted nature. The fainting spells may be a method of rest. Let her sleep all she can. Very little can be done for her. I will leave some drops to be given if she is very restless and will look in in the

morning. It is rather unfortunate this should happen to you, just now."

"Oh, school has closed and there is plenty of help. I want everything done for her."

Then Mrs. Barrington returned to the room. Miss Arran sat by the foot of the bed, Lilian was bathing her mother's face.

"My child," Mrs. Barrington said,"you had better lie down and get a little rest. We will watch—"

"No, I want Lilian," entreated the mother. "You will not leave me? When I am a little rested I want to tell you how it came—"

"Yes, yes, but not now. I would rather stay here. It is my place, and now there are no other duties."

So the hours wore on. Mrs. Boyd seemed to fall into a tranquil sleep. Lilian laid down on her own bed, and slept in a disturbed sort of fashion. Then morning came, and the house was astir.

"Oh, Miss Arran have you watched all night? How good you are!"

"I had several naps. Your mother was very quiet. She seems better. Mrs. Dane is coming in and you must get some breakfast. Then if we need a nurse—"

"Oh, no, do not have one. My place is

here. Oh, Miss Arran," and Lilian turned deadly pale, "you heard what she said last evening. It *can't* be true. Would any one ever work and make sacrifices for a child not her own? She *is* my mother."

Miss Arran nodded. "Unless she is much worse I do not think we will need a nurse. There will be so little to do in the house that I shall be quite at liberty."

"Yes, Mrs. Boyd was much stronger," the doctor admitted, though the case was not much more hopeful. A second stroke might end it all. "But she seems to have something on her mind. Is it anxiety about her daughter?"

"I have assured her that Lilian will be my charge. She has the making of an unusually fine scholar, and she is a high minded, honorable girl, sincere and ambitious."

"The daughter has taken from somewhere a much stronger physical and mental equipment. What of the father?"

"Oh, he died when she was a mere infant."

The embargo had been removed from Lilian and Mrs. Dane treated her with a sort of tolerant sympathy. She roamed about the deserted library and chose some books, a few girls waylaid her in the school room. Miss

Nevins made an importunate appeal, quite forgetting her past disdain.

"Oh, why can't you stay down here?" she cried. "It's awful dull, and there's no fun going on. Miss Graniss is going to take us down town when the stores are lighted up, but it's so long to wait until evening."

"Mother is ill and I want to stay with her," Lilian returned coldly, provoked at the selfishness. She read awhile, then took up some embroidery. Miss Trenham came in with the gift of a beautiful volume of poems. Claire sent a little reminder in a most exquisite book mark. She was quite delighted in the change to another home, where there were two girls. Could Edith do anything for them?"

"They are all so good here, and mother doesn't need much, she seems to sleep a good deal."

The sick girl at the Clairvoyant's was improving. Not even a case of measles had been reported in town.

So the winter day drew to a close. Lilian watched the little procession starting out under the convoy of Miss Graniss. Yes, she had run out that way at Laconia—how long ago it seemed. Oh, she ought to have sent a few

gifts to old girl friends. She had really no heart for gladness.

Lilian sat over by the gas burner reading that most bautiful Christmas part of "In Memoriam." She almost heard the "happy bells ring across the snow, so rapt was she in the poets charm. Then something stirred. Her mother was trying to raise herself.

"Oh mother—"

"Put the pillows around me, so, I want to sit up. I want to talk. I have been living it over. And I am surely going to that other country. I shall have my own two babies in my arms, and their father will come to meet me. I want to tell you how it was. It has come back so distinctly, much plainer than when I wrote it."

Miss Arran had started to come in but paused at the door. Lilian's back was towards her. Mrs. Dane going through the hall paused as Miss Arran held up her finger.

"Oh, mother, not tonight."

"Yes, now. I feel so strong. After husband died my brother sent for me and wanted me and wanted me to take up some land adjoining his. Mr. Holland, who was holding the life insurance—all I had, was not willing until I had seen what the place was like and

he thought that kind of life very hard on women, but my brother was the only relative I had, though I had not seen him for years. After I had started I was frightened about the journey and the strange people. There was one woman with a baby, a bright, beautiful child with rosy cheeks and brilliant eyes. I supposed her the mother, for I saw her nurse the infant, and there was with them such a beautiful woman. She came to me in the night, and when I looked at her the last time she was dead," and she sighed.

"We were most of us asleep when there was an awful crash. Then horrible shrieks and cries and being thrown about—"

"Oh, mother, don't, don't!" Lilian implored. "Your mind is wandering—"

"No, it is true, horribly true. It was one of the awful accidents of that time, more than fifteen years ago, but I suppose I became unconscious. My babe flew out of my arms; my little baby," in a lingering tone as if the words were sweet to say.

"When I came to myself it was in a room where several were lying around on cots, and two women sat close together trying to hush the crying child."

"Give me my baby, I almost shrieked. Bring me my baby."

"They brought it and I hugged it to my breast, gave it nourishment, cuddled it in my arms and I fell asleep full of joy. We both slept a long while. When I woke the woman brought me a cup of tea and some bread. I was ravenously hungry. Then I asked what had happened. It had been twenty-four hours.

"It was a horrible accident at a place where tracks crossed. All day they had been clearing away the wreck and sending bodies into the nearest towns for this place was small. A number had been killed outright. Will you give me some of that tea in the tumbler?"

"Oh, mother, do not tell any more," the girl pleaded, shuddering.

"Yes, I must, I must! When morning came the woman helped me up and I had some breakfast. I had been stunned and bruised, but no bones were broken."

"We are so glad the baby was yours, one of the women said. "The other poor baby and its mother was killed."

"I went to the bed presently and turned down the blanket. There lay the lovely child warm and rosy, the picture of health. I devoured it with kisses. Yes, it was mine.

God had saved it and sent it to me. It had no mother, so it was mine. I called it by my baby's name, and I couldn't have cared more for my own flesh and blood. You were so beautiful and bright—so fond and loving. On the other side of the room lay the lovely woman who had interested me so much. They thought her dying, she looked as if she were dead, I never saw anything more perfect. She was like sculptured marble. They were trying to get every one away and the next day an official questioned me and offered to make good any loss. I had my ticket pinned to the lining of my dress, and what money I had taken with me sewed up in a little bag. There had been a fire as well, and much of the baggage was burned. I had lost my trunk but they paid me its full value and more, and sent me on my journey.

"I have told you what a dismal place my brother had in Wisconsin. There were five big, rough children. I was not fitted for farm work. I missed my old friends and so I went back to Laconia, but my whole life was wrapped up in you."

"And many a time I must have seemed ungrateful. Oh, mother, when you did so much for me!" sobbed Lilian.

"Oh, dear, I have thought it all out. You were not of my kind. It fretted me at first. You were always a little lady, doing things in a nicer way than most girls, and you were forever reading and studying. If we could have kept the boarding house," in tones of regret, "but there was my long illness and the house was sold torn down for a great factory. Then I took up the sewing. It was easier in some ways. I liked Sally Marks and her mother so much. The gay jolliness and the merry chat. They were like two girls together. But your heart was set on the High School. Oh, Lilian, do believe I would have kept you there if I could. Then I began to wonder what your own mother and father had been like, and if your father was alive. Perhaps he could have done much better for you. The thought wore on me, and I was not well; I knew that. You see I should have had a girl who did not mind working in a shop and enjoying good times with other girls, going to parties and picnics and having lovers and marrying as I did, and having babies. I loved babies so. To be a grandmother to a little flock seemed very heaven to me."

"Oh, mother, don't! You will break my heart," sobbed Lilian.

"No, child, you were not to blame. God gave you all these high thoughts and ambitions; I never had any of them, and after we eame here I understood it still better. You bclonged to these kind of people, your ways were theirs, your ambition was right, and I was very thankful that such a refuge opened for us. You have been a good, devoted child. Tomorrow we will talk it over again. Now will you send for some toast and eat. Oh, Lilian, child, don't cry. God will bring you out right and forgive me for what I did out of longing love."

Lilian turned, Miss Arran took a step forward. "I will bring it to you," she said, and she motioned to Mrs. Dane who stood like a statue.

"Let us go to Mrs. Barrington. She must know this," she whispered.

Lilian bathed her face and readjusted her mother's pillows. The whole world seemed in a daze about her. Yet she was not so much surprised either, but stunned, incapable now of judging whether there had been any right or wrong. If no one belonging to her had been found—and her own mother was among the killed, she might have been turned over to some foundling asylum.

"I feel much better," exclaimed Mrs. Boyd. But, oh, Lilian, don't pray for me to live, for I should be a helpless burden on you, and I'll have my two own babies in heaven. I meant to do it for the best when I claimed you, and I think God will understand. It's been a poor, broken sort of life but I've tried to do up to the lights I had, and yours will be better, higher. Mrs. Barrington appreciated you and will help you. God surely opened this way for us."

Was it truly of God's providence? She had longed so ardently for the refinements of life, the possibilities of education. Some times it seemed as if He answered petitions in the suppliant's way and freighted them with another burden.

But if this should be laid upon her she would pray for strength to do her whole duty. It was hardly likely she would ever find any one belonging to her, that was too wild a thought. She would keep this generous foster mother as long as she needed love and care.

CHAPTER IX

WHOSE CHILD AM I?

Miss Arran tapped lightly at the half-open door and Mrs. Barrington bade both ladies enter.

"How is Mrs. Boyd?"

"Why she seems curiously better. She has been talking awhile to her daughter and her voice has a latent strength that surprises one, and we have been unwitting listeners to a most remarkable story. Did you ever suspect that she might not be the own mother of Miss Boyd?"

"The thought has crossed my mind. They are so dissimilar."

"I have never really liked Mrs. Boyd or the girl either," began Mrs. Dane. "There seemed something to conceal, some secret between them. I had a fancy Lilian was on the watch all the time lest her mother should betray it."

"Oh, did you think that? It appeared to me the anxiety of a girl of good breeding lest her mother should fall into habits of a different kind that were rather annoying. Yet they had always been together—"

"It seemed to me aping a style really above what she had been used, a certain pretentious-

ness, that did not appear suitable to her position, but she has proved a devoted nurse and daughter, and I will confess my prejudice has received a great shock, and I admit frankly that I may have been mistaken when I accused her of being at the Clairvoyant's. Miss Arran will you tell the story—it seems a deathbed confession."

Miss Arran began. She had started to go in Mrs. Boyd's room to see if anything was needed when the words arrested her, and she detailed the journey Mrs. Boyd had undertaken with her infant child, the dreadful midnight disaster, the unconsciousness of the poor woman until the next day, her hearing the child cry and claiming it unwittingly, and then learning the child s mother had been killed as well as her own baby and her resolve to keep it; her taking it on her farther journey, and caring for it as her own, her latent remorse lest she should have defrauded the girl out of a better birthright—"

Mrs. Barrington rose suddenly and paced the room in strange agitation.

"Somewhere I have heard a story that might be the other side of this. It is very strange," clasping her hands. "One would not want to make a mistake."

"I wish you might *hear* the story, and one point of importance is whether it would be wisdom to help the girl in any search for her parentage. Sometimes unfortunate facts come to light. You, perhaps, can tell what will be the best course to pursue."

"Yes, I am glad you came to me. I had resolved to keep Miss Boyd here after her mother was gone. I must give the matter some thought. We will not be hasty. Yes, I should like to hear the confession and ask her some questions. Lilian must not stay alone tonight."

"I will gladly offer my services if they would be acceptable," said Mrs. Dane.

"I think I will take the first part of the night, and then you may be watcher. I thank you very much for your kindness."

Mrs. Barrington went to the quiet apartment. Lilian had fallen asleep with her head on her mother's pillow. She had exhausted herself with a soft, pitiful crying. With the quick unreason of youth she upbraided herself for the many times she had been secretly mortified at her mother's lack of the qualities she liked best. She had spent hours in dreaming of a phantom mother sweet, graceful and refined, who loved all delightful things, who

was stirred by music and poetry, who could receive guests with a gracious hospitality in the pretty home which should be simple as befitted moderate means. The sympathy between them would be perfect. They would linger over well-loved poets, they would discuss their brave heroes and favorite heroines. How many times she had fallen asleep with this dear mother's hand clasped in hers!

But here had been the hard working mother instead. Yes, she had tried to help. Nearly all the summer vacation she had sewed steadily, but she had never given the real love. It was as if neither truly understood the other's language.

"All the rest of her life I will try," was her last conscious thought.

Mrs. Barrington found them both asleep. She studied the girl's face, the finely cut features, the wide eyelids with their bronze fringe, the beautifully curved lips. It *was* an aristocratic face. She hardly dared think there *was* a resemblance, and yet it explained what had puzzled her at times. "Lilian," she said softly. "Lilian, child, it is time you were in bed."

The girl roused suddenly with a startled

look. Then she caught the hand and pressed a fervent kiss upon it.

"You are all so kind," she murmured. "I can never repay you sufficiently."

"Do not think of that, I am going to sit here awhile with your mother and you must try and get some sleep."

"Mother is better I think," hesitatingly. "She is stronger, and now she is sleeping peacefully."

She slept on with only a rather heavy breathing. At one Mrs. Dane came to relieve her. Lilian was on the alert quite early and her mother asked for some breakfast.

At ten the doctor came. "I feel so much stronger," the invalid said, "but I can't move my limbs. There doesn't seem any life in them."

"It was quite a severe stroke."

"And if I should have another?"

"We won't think of that just now. You must eat what you can of nourishing food."

Mrs. Boyd glanced up at the doctor with beseeching eyes—

"It is best that I shouldn't live—"

"For your daughter's sake." Dr. Kendricks felt almost ashamed of the platitude.

A helpless burden on a young girl, a poor, weak woman.

"It *is* for her sake. She has found a good friend in Mrs. Barrington, and I can do no more. I did what I thought best then, but I did it for the sake of my aching, lonely heart. But for the child I believe I must have died then. Doesn't God forgive when you do what seems best?"

There was anguish in every line of the wasted face.

"God knows the motive of every deed, and if it is done in single mindedness, in love and charity he will accept."

"It was done in love. You see, her mother was dead. There was no one to claim her. Oh, what am I saying! Go away, you can do nothing for me, and she turned her face over to the wall.

He stood some seconds by her. She was crying softly, and again motioned him away with her hand.

He went out of the room and looked around. Yes, there was Mrs. Barrington.

"What is the matter between that mother and daughter?" he inquired brusquely. "She seems—well *is* the girl her own child? Has she done—something—"

"Oh, doctor can you spare a little time? I am troubled and puzzled. She made a strange confession last night and it seemed almost as if I knew the connecting link. Let me call Mrs. Dane and Miss Arran."

They came and at Mrs. Barrington's invitation were seated. The doctor studied them a moment with drawn brows.

"Doctor, I want you to relate your experience of more than fifteen years ago when you went out to the scene of that frightful accident from which Mrs. Crawford has suffered so long and when her twin daughter was lost."

"What has that to do with it?"

"You will see. I believe Major Crawford left his wife and daughter in your charge when he was ordered to the west with his regiment."

"Yes." He seemed to study a few moments. "Then came the word of the skirmish with the Indians when he was wounded in the leg which proved so much worse than he first thought and she decided to go out to him and take one of the babies. He had gone fairly wild over the birth of the little girls; they had so longed for a daughter. Marguerite, if you remember, was a strong, robust baby, laughing if you so much as smiled at her. A beautiful baby, I thought, looking much like her mother. Zai-

dee was smaller and more delicate, though never ill that I can recall. She decided to take Marguerite and the wet nurse who was very proud of her charge and fond of Mrs. Crawford. When we heard of the frightful disaster you may remember that I went out at once. It was a most dreary place, just a sort of freight station where the tracks crossed the through road. It could not be called a town, though now it is a thriving city and the freighting road runs miles below. When I reached the place most of the wreckage had been cleared away, the dead buried, the wounded sent to friends or hospitals at a distance. I found about half a dozen remaining, four of them almost well enough to resume their journey. Two were thought hopeless, one of them being Mrs. Crawford. Fifteen years ago there were not so many conveniences as there are now, and as the fire broke out afterward the baggage was mostly lost and it was quite difficult to find the names of the passengers at first. The nurse and the baby had been killed outright. There was one other baby on the train and that had been taken farther West with its mother."

Miss Arran and the housekeeper exchanged glances.

"Mrs. Crawford had sustained some injury to the brain and for the first few days they had thought her dead half a dozen times. The people where she had been taken were very kind. She was in a comatose state most of the time, and when she roused seemed quite ignorant of what had happened. There was some injury to the back that rendered her limbs useless. As soon as I could make arrangements I had her removed to Indianapolis to a fine hospital where we found, on an exhaustive examination, the spine had been injured, the ligatures strained and muscles actually torn apart. When the Major was well enough to travel—and he came very near losing his leg, it seemed, he joined us, and we journeyed on to New York. Meanwhile the Major's brother had died, a queer, penurious old fellow who had never given up his rights in the estate and now it all came to the Major, besides a large amount of money. He resigned from the army and they came home. Mrs. Crawford had kept her mind through all this and had been most brave, recovering very slowly as you know and when she could manage to get about on crutches it appeared as if the last stage of recovery had been attained; but now it seems nothing short of a miracle.

And there was the beautiful little golden haired fairy to gladden their hearts—"

"But the nurse and the child?" interrupted Miss Arran.

"The child was crushed beyond recognition. They placed it in the coffin with the nurse and buried it temporarily. The Major meant to have it brought home, but it was so long before they could get about it, and it seemed like living the heart-breaking episode over, so he concluded to have it permanently interred in a burying ground a few miles distant, which is now a really beautiful spot. Mrs. Crawford was ill so long that it seems like a dream to her."

"And did no one ever hear of the other child?"

"What was there to hear? The mother claimed it."

"The woman dying in yonder room claimed the child first, ignorantly, then believing the mother dead, took it in the place of her poor murdered child."

"No!" The doctor sprang up and began to pace the floor. "Why, then, that young girl—"

"Miss Arran will you tell the other side of

the story. Why it seems to me there can be no mistake," said Mrs. Barrington.

"Well—this is most marvelous. Does the girl know—"

"Oh, she protests. I think she has no idea. But the mother fancies we may find some relative, a father perhaps, for she truly believes the mother dead."

"But this confession—would she repeat it again?"

"I think she spoke of having it written out somewhere."

"It must be well authenticated, you know. And—what steps have you considered?"

"None. Tomorrow will be Sunday—they will all go to church to give thanks; then on Christmas day they are to have a small family dinner. You and Mrs. Kendricks and myself, two or three dear old friends, and it would be hardly wise to mar the sacredness of the occasion. We may see our way more clearly, I would not like to have Miss Boyd disturbed on uncertainties."

"I will take a further look at her," said the doctor. "I have known cases like hers to last weeks, even when strength seemed to be almost gone."

He wanted also to see Miss Boyd again.

He had not noticed her critically. Mrs. Barrington had spoken of the likeness that had puzzled her in the beginning, the elusive resemblance to Mrs. Crawford in her girlhood, as for two years she had been at school. He paused at the door. She was standing by the window her profile distinctly outlined. It was classic, from the broad, shapely forehead, the down-dropped eyelids with their dark fringe, the straight nose with the fine, flexible nostrils, the rounded chin, the lips that seemed to shut in sadness and longing, but it was the poise of the head, the arching neck, the shoulders proud enough for a statue. It needed more real youthfulness for sixteen, but one could trace resemblances.

Did she feel the scrutiny? She turned. The front view was more girlish.

"Oh," she exclaimed, "mother is sleeping. Is it a bad sign for her to sleep so much?"

"It gives her rest and saves the wear on her nerves. You are a watchful nurse. Where did you learn so much?"

"I think it comes to you when one has done so much for you," she answered quietly.

"Did you always live in that western country town?" he asked, just to make talk.

Lilian colored and hesitated. "When I was

a baby mother went out to Wisconsin to her brother's, I don't remember anything of that. Yes, afterward we lived in Laconia until we came here; but, do you think she can—mend?" and she approached the bed.

Dr. Kendricks made a slow movement in the negative. "She has very little strength. Was she ill before she came here?"

"Long ago she had a fever, but I think now she has been weakly for a year or more. I was so anxious to keep in school. Oh, I ought to have helped more," and the tears stood in her eyes. "For we were poor."

She uttered the fact with a kind of prideful dignity. "She did everything for me and I had planned when I began to earn money that we would have a home—"

"Yes, you have been a good daughter," and all this while she might have been living in a delightful manner in her father's house, loving and beloved, the comfort of her mother! For she would have been a devoted daughter in that beautiful home. He hardened his heart against the dying woman, and walked quietly out of the room.

"The story must be true," he admitted to Mrs. Barrington. "But I cannot tell what step to take first. Would you mind if I saw

Mr. Ledwith? He has been the Crawford lawyer and was the brother's executor. I am quite mystified and perhaps not capable of judging."

"Why, I think that would be an excellent plan. Yes. He can tell better what steps to take. But Lilian will not leave the poor woman. I am not sure she believes the story. She does not count on any change but is glad to stay here with me and fit herself for earning a living. She has a very loyal nature."

Mrs. Boyd roused and ate her dinner, then Lilian read her to sleep again. She begged not to be sent out to walk and Mrs. Barrington yielded.

At five Mr. Ledwith called, full of interest in the strange story and begged to see Mrs. Boyd, wondering if she would repeat it. Lilian was summoned.

"Oh, it would seem cruel to disturb her," she cried with passionate tenderness, "and she suffered so in telling it the other evening. It cannot make much difference to me, since my own mother was killed, and my father may have been dead before that. I shall always hold her in my memory as my mother."

"But the woman who was killed may not have been your mother."

Lilian started in surprise.

"There seems to be a reason why we should be certain in this. Trust me, I will not torment her needlessly."

"My dear child it *is* best;" said Mrs. Barrington. "Can you not trust me?"

Lilian was not convinced but she led the way.

"Oh, where have you been so long?" cried the invalid. "You said you would stay—has some one come to take you away? Oh, you will not go. You promised. It will be only a little while."

She fell into a pitiable terror. Lilian soothed. Mr. Ledwith tried to explain that they might possibly find the young girl's father who was now a prosperous man.

But Mrs. Boyd would not be persuaded. She began to talk incoherently, and suddenly raising her head and leaning on one elbow said —"send them away. It is all true as I told you. You are not my own child, but I have loved you all these years, oh, you *will* stay with me! I can feel that it will not be for long. It is there in the drawer—I wrote it out. It took so long and I was so tired, so

tired! Give it to them and send them away. Oh, Lilian, he is not your father. Promise me you will not go with him."

Lilian opened the drawer. There lay quite a big packet, with the superscription,—"For my daughter Lilian when I am dead."

She simply handed it to Mr. Ledwith. He and Mrs. Barrington left the room. Mrs. Boyd gave way to a wild fit of weeping and Lilian had much ado to comfort her, but presently she soothed her to slumber.

"Who heard this story or confession?" he asked as they entered the library.

"Mrs. Dane and Miss Arran."

"Will they come and listen? They can tell whether the two will agree and point out any discrepancy."

It was written in a shaky hand and evidently at intervals, many words misspelled and phrases repeated, but with a passionate sincerity and an overwhelming love for the child whose mother she thought dead, and she fancied the baby might be thrown on the charity of the world, but she knew even then it was not her baby but the longing for the child was pitiful. Mrs. Barrington was reading it and now and then her voice faltered.

"Oh," said Miss Arran, "they are alike ex-

cept that this seems more pathetic. There is no doubt of the truth in my mind. Of course *she* saw the difference as Miss Lilian grew older and she was afraid she might have defrauded her of some better fortune. Oh, I pity the poor woman profoundly. She had a hard life. Mrs. Barrington, this must have seemed a haven of rest to her. Providence must have guided you."

"It is certainly remarkable," subjoined Mr. Ledwith. "I will see Dr. Kendricks this evening, but I think we had better wait until after Christmas so as not to mar the happy reunion of that day. Then we must see how the Major will take it. It is one of the things he almost never refers to, and he was afraid of intensifying the loss by having the body brought here for burial. Truly there are many strange happenings in this world. I am requested to look up another child that was given out for adoption, and now has a fortune coming to it after twenty years."

CHAPTER X

UNRAVELING TANGLED THREADS

Sunday morning was glorious. There had been a light fall of snow and every tree and shrub was in feathery whiteness, while the sky was as blue as June. The sun came up through the long levels of yellow light more golden than ever until every branch and twig shimmered in iridescent hues.

Lilian bathed and dressed herself, now and then leaning over her mother who seemed to breathe regularly, but the face was thin and pallid, and the soft hair seemed to have whitened in these few days. She bent over and kissed the cool forehead.

Miss Arran looked in.

"Oh, is it all right? I left you at two; there really was no need of watches as I was just across the hall, but I think you confine yourself too closely. Now you must go down and take a walk on the porch. The morning air has a positive balminess in it. It really should be Christmas morning with the angels singing for very joy."

Lilian looked undecided. Yet the very thought of sunshine and fresh air was reviving.

"I will call you the moment she wakes," said Miss Arran, and the girl went.

Oh, how delightful it was! She drew in long breaths and gave a great, fervent thanksgiving. Yes, it was good to live, to be able to work, to have a purpose in life and see the way to attain it.

She went in presently. Her mother had just wakened. She bathed her face and hands with fragrant water, brushed her hair and put on a pretty dressing sacque of her own. Then she had some breakfast which she appeared to enjoy.

"I feel so drowsy," she said. "I am so comfortable and at ease."

That was much to be thankful for.

"Lilian will you do me a favor this morning," began Mrs. Barrington in her most persuasive voice. "I want you to go to church with me. The Crawford family will be there to give thanks. And we have learned that your mother was in the same fearful accident and her escape was a marvel. All these years Mrs. Crawford has been an invalid but she has borne her suffering with exemplary patience. Dr. Kendricks went out at once but there was scarcely any hope of her living then. Your mother spoke of a beautiful woman they

thought dying or dead—do you remember?"

"Oh, yes. A woman with such lovely golden hair. Miss Zaidee's is exquisite, too. Yes, I will go. I should like to see her. How strange it all is! And my own mother, it seems, was among the killed."

"It was terrible. Of course your mother going away so soon did not hear all of it. Yes, I want you to go with me."

Dr. Kendricks made his visit and saw there was little change. Several of the girls were going and they started early. Mrs. Barrington kept two pews on one side of the church, which was all in Christmas attire with wreaths of holly here and there, and clusters of golden flowers dried in their natural colors. The altar was fragrant with real blossoms and to Lilian there came a deeper emotion than reverence; something she had never experienced before. She who had no joy of her very own must rejoice in that of others and search out the blessings of the spirit, find a way into the other kingdom, where the things one hungers and longs for are laid up against the time one is fitted for the pure and high enjoyment of them. The strength of the steadfast waiting, the lives that touched with near or remote sympathy and held God's promise for today,

for all time. There was something kept for those who wearied not, that was bestowed when the soul had come to understand the true source of beneficent living.

She had been listening to the beautiful music and now there was a sudden hush while several of the congregation entered. There were Major and Mrs. Crawford, and certainly curious eyes might be pardoned as she walked up the aisle with a graceful step. Oh, yes, she *was* a lovely woman, as in sweet humility and reverence she bowed her head.

Then followed Zay and the fine looking midshipman who showed his pride in every line. What it must be to have a brother like that! Yet there was no envy in Lilian's soul, since all these joys and privileges were far beyond her. But she had a quick, responsive nature when anything really touched her, and she joyed sincerely in this others joy.

The service was gracious and comforting even to her. Hundreds of years ago ignorant shepherds sat watching their flocks all the long starlight night, and then the song of the angels, the great promise, the new era, the blessedness for the whole world that each might take his share.

And the reverent prayer of this, Thy ser-

vant, delivered from her bodily illness who desired to return thanks in the presence of all Thy people touched her heart to tears, and she joined in it fervently.

The class did not stay for the whole service. Lilian hurried home, glad to escape the chatter of the curious. Her mother had just roused.

"It was such a sweet, comforting service. I wish you could have heard it, and—" would she understand about Mrs. Crawford—her "beautiful woman?"

"I'm afraid when you leave me. Don't go away again," and the thin lips quivered.

"But you have slept all the time, and you *do* feel better."

"If I could move about—" fretfully.

"Can I help?"

"Oh, no. I want to do it myself, but my limbs won't stir. Is it spring, that the sun shines so?"

"No, dear. Tomorrow will be Christmas."

"Do you remember Sally? She had a party you know and you wouldn't go—"

"But I was only a little girl, a school girl, and they were young ladies."

"Lilian do you mean never to have a lover? It is the happiest time for a girl. He takes you

out and buys you pretty little things. He gave me that work box on Christmas, and a ring afterward. I don't see how God could have let him get killed—we were so happy. He wasn't your father. Both his babies died. Do you suppose he found them in heaven?"

Mrs. Boyd began to cry. Her mind wandered considerably now. Lilian tried to read to her but she broke in with irrelevant snatches that had been pleasures to her long ago until she dropped off to sleep again.

There was a rather joyous time in the morning. Mrs. Barrington remembered her household and the girls who had been compelled to stay.

Lilian gave thanks for two beautiful volumes of poetry. Miss Arran remembered her with a box of very nice stationery, Mrs. Dane with some handkerchiefs, Mrs. Barrington went to the dinner at Crawford House, but the girls complained of the dullness. Lilian was so used to being sufficient for herself, so fond of reading that the day passed even if it had no Christmas joys.

It was very happy at Crawford House. Vincent had arrived in the morning and added to their joy. Zay was bright and animated

and the three planned many delights for the future.

"There ought to be some young people," said the mother, "but we couldn't have both and yours will come later on. I wanted these dear old friends who have been such a comfort in my hard and trying years and then I shall begin over with you and be young again."

"And I was proud enough when I found I was put on the list for a three years' cruise," declared Willard, "and now the thought quite unmans me. But we may stop at some place where you can all take a flying trip."

"It can't be next summer," said Vincent. I have engaged them for my grand occasion. Next June I shall be a full fledged soldier and there will be the ball in which Zay will shine a star of the first magnitude."

"And set the day after," laughed the girl. "Oh, Phil Rosewald wants to come and half a dozen others, but I suppose you can't invite so many sisters and cousins."

Vincent drew his face in an amusing half frown. "Is Phil as funny as ever? Doesn't she sometimes jump over the traces? And how about the lovers? I think she had them ever since she stepped out of the cradle."

"In the multitude there is safety," said their father.

Mrs. Barrington could not keep her thoughts from the lonely girl watching beside the dying woman. Oh, how would she get to her true place in the bright happy group. For years she had been as dead to them. Would Zay, who had garnered all the love and tenderness in her own girlish heart, be willing to share it?

Dr. Kendricks drew her a little aside, "I can't stand it!" he exclaimed, "I couldn't break in upon this blessed day, but the thought of Miss Boyd has haunted me every moment. I must tell the Major tomorrow morning. Oh, how do you suppose he will take it? Mrs. Boyd is no longer reliable, her mind fails hourly. But out of the mouth of two or three witnesses everything shall be established. Hasn't Miss Boyd any curiosity?"

"Very little. She thinks her mother is dead and has built no hopes about a father and she relies upon my word. She has looked forward to caring for herself so long that I hardly see how she will give it up. At first she will not be glad. If the Major should doubt the story—"

"The likeness grows upon one. I saw it so plainly this morning. She is more like her

mother than Zay and will make a fine looking woman. And I have seen it in Mrs. Crawford a dozen times today. I no longer doubt and I feel like an arch conspirator."

Mrs. Crawford was enjoying herself keenly, though the nurse insisted she must take to the sofa and let others do the talking. The children gathered about her, full of eager love. Was there in the whole wide world a happier mother? And yet—far away another darling lay in a lonesome grave. She had ceased to speak of it and her husband thought she had outlived the sorrow. In a certain way she had.

Then the guests prepared to depart. At nine Vincent was to take his train.

"But you and father can run up now and then. They will be glad to see him. They are always proud of their old graduates, especially those who have distinguished themselves. But, I'm glad you didn't have to make a present of your leg to the country."

"It did come pretty near it. Ah, we have a great many mercies to be thankful for. It seems as if there was nothing more to ask except that you boys should keep in the right way."

"As we shall try to," Willard returned and

Vincent's eyes gave a similar promise as he kissed his mother good-by.

"Put on your wraps and come along with us Zay," said Willard. "You must need an airing by this time."

Zay was nothing loth. They talked of next summer, the elder brother regretting that he would be in Japan in all probability. Then they said a tender good-by, and on the homeward way Willard proposed a call on the Norton's where there were two charming girls and a few other guests who were having a little dance.

"Oh, yes," assented the young midshipman. "For you see, girls will be quite out of my line the next three years. I shall sigh for their charms and return a critical and opinionated bachelor, judging all girls by the novels I have read in my solitude."

"I think I'll make you out a list," said Eva Norton, laughingly.

"Do, and send it in a letter with your approval and disapproval of the characters so I shall know what to copy and what to avoid.

"And now you must have one dance."

Zay thought it rather late, but her brother overruled and they had a merry time, but it was midnight before they returned.

Major Crawford and his wife often had their breakfast in the dainty sitting room up stairs. Zay just glanced in to bid them good-morning as Willard was impatiently calling her down. She had not slept very well and had a headache, and she would not go out for a walk with him. She heard her father reading the paper aloud, so she went to her room and dropped on the bed again. Her throat began to feel sore and swollen. When she heard the doctor's voice in the hall she leaned over the banister and said: "Dr. Kendricks will you come up here a minute or two?"

"Yes, yes, what now? Did you feast too high yesterday?"

"I don't know. I feel sick all over. First I'm all of a shiver and then so hot and my head aches."

"Well, we must inquire into it. Yes, you are flushed and getting excited. I think it is a feverish cold and some indigestion. We'll soon fix that all right. Luckily I brought my medecine chest along," and he laughed.

"Doctor, you don't think—are there any more cases of scarlet fever?" and her voice was tremulous.

"Scarlet fever! Don't get any such nonsense in your curly pate. No, there's not

another case and the little girl is recovering rapidly. Why you've not been even exposed to it and yours is just a cold. Now, alternate with these and I'll be in again this afternoon. But, I'd stay in bed and rest."

She slipped into a soft white wrapper, and Katy came in to straighten up her room.

"You were out late last night, Miss Zay and you've caught a cold."

"But, I so rarely have a cold."

"It sounds in your voice. Keep wrapped up good and warm. There's nothing like heat to drive out those pernickety colds and I wish you'd drink some hot water."

"I'll see by and by."

She turned her hot throbbing temple over on the pillow. If only she could shut out the sight and the smell of the clairvoyant's room, and that boy grasping for breath. It must have been something awful for them both to die almost together and be shut up at once in their coffins; and then a horror seized her. She had always been so well and joyous. Oh, what if she should die? It would kill her mother. Girls were more to their mothers; business called so many of the boys away.

She began to cry. The doctor and her father went down stairs. She thought her

mother would come in and tried to calm the sort of hysterical mood. What *were* they talking about so long? Was she worse than the doctor had admitted? She heard her father's voice rise as if in a passion which his visitor seemed trying to subdue. Oh, what *had* happened?

Her mother entered the room very pale and with frightened eyes.

"Oh, Zay," she cried, dropping on the side of the bed, "have you any idea what your father and Doctor Kendricks are quarreling about? Your father is not easily excited—he used to be very quick in temper but he has grown so gentle and considerate. But it is something that rouses him to white heat. We have always been such dear friends since that time of the great sorrow, and it is not about the boys, I know. Oh, Zay, what is the matter? You look ill—you must have a fever, your eyes show it."

"The doctor called it a feverish cold. He is coming again this afternoon." She was half listening to the tumult in the library, and she shook as if in an ague.

"Oh, there they go again. Why—they are going out, and she went to the hall to call to her husband but the door was flung to as if

in a passion. Then someone entered and ran lightly upstairs.

"Mother, Zay, what is the row about? Father looks as if he—but he never *does* drink and they are going to Mrs. Barrington's."

Zay buried her face in her hands and began to sob.

"Oh, mother, what is it? Has Vin met with some accident? And we were so happy yesterday! Do you remember the old story of the gods being jealous of the happiness of mortals? There was nothing to wish for."

"I do not know what it is, but it has excited your father desperately and I am afraid Zay is going to be ill."

"My dear Zay—I should not have kept you out so late last night. We called at the Norton's and had a little dance. Don't you need the doctor—"

"He was in. He is coming this afternoon. Oh, my head aches—"

"And you look fit to drop, mother. Let me call the nurse."

Freida gently impelled Mrs. Crawford to her own room and laid her on the lounge, making passes over her brow and chafing her cold hands.

"Now, lie still and get tranquil, and I will see to the young lady."

"I would like to put you in a hot bath with plenty of salt, and then give you a good rub. Why, you have gone all to pieces, as you Americans say."

Zaidee made no demur. Willard went and read aloud to his mother. The girl was bathed and rubbed and rolled in a blanket. She felt real drowsy, but the thought haunted her—what if Louie Howe had been taken ill with scarlet fever and they had sent word to Mrs. Barrington? Then Louie must have confessed and the three would be implicated. No wonder her father was angry!

She tossed around for awhile but, in spite, of her mental excitement she fell asleep. The luncheon hour passed; no one wanted to eat. Then Major Crawford let himself in with his latchkey. He was very pale now.

"Oh, is there bad news?" asked Willard.

"It depends on—how your mother takes it. Such a strange story—I can hardly credit it myself. Do not let us be interrupted unless I have to summon someone," and he passed on his way upstairs.

CHAPTER XI

STANDING UP TO THE MARK

Lilian Boyd bathed her mother's face and hands as usual and prepared her breakfast. Her eyes were brighter, her voice stronger, but the girl noticed that her face seemed a little swollen and the lines about her mouth had lost their flexibility.

"You are surely better. You have more appetite," yet the tone was not hopeful.

"Oh, my dear, it is nearer the end, and it is best. You will do better without me, and what if you should find someone—a father to be proud of you? Such things have happened, and I may have kept you out of something that was your right. Oh, will God forgive me?"

Lilian caught the thin hand and pressed it to her lips.

"Mother, you must not worry about this. Suppose my own mother was a widow like you going to a new home to earn her living. Why, I might have been put in some Children's Asylum. And I have had many comforts and a love willing to make sacrifices. I have been a dreamy girl building air castles for the future, but I would have worked hard to

make them real. I see now how much is needed and I am not afraid——"

"Oh, if I could think you had lost nothing through my selfish love——"

"But it was your friend who sent us here. And you are not sorry we came?"

"Oh, my child, it was truly God's providence. Mrs. Barrington has been so good. She will help you to attain your best aims. Since we have been here I have realized the difference between us that I only felt vaguely before. You belong to these people. You have their ways and it is not all education, either. This is why I feel your people could not have been in the common walks of life."

She paused, exhausted.

"Now, you must not talk any more but try to sleep. Shall I read to you?"

"No, not now. Oh, Lilian, you will not tire of me? You will not leave me? It cannot be long——"

"No, no, and this will be my home. Let that comfort you."

Lilian took up some embroidery. Mrs. Barrington had merely looked in to inquire. How still the house seemed, and she was in a highly nervous mood. What if Major Crawford should not believe the story? Well,

Lilian Boyd should never know how near she had come to being a heroine of romance, and she should achieve some of her desires.

Mrs. Boyd drowsed. Yes, it was really the providence of God that she should be removed. She would always have the things she most desired, which she, Mrs. Boyd could not have given her in the pretty home Lilian had been planning. She had been happy with her lover, then her husband. But, Lilian would shrink from the kiss of the grimy man fresh from his hard work, and after his brief ablutions, sitting down to supper in his shirt sleeves and then lighting his pipe and pushing his baby up and down the front walk, jesting and laughing with the neighbors. There were blocks of them, most of them happy women, too, except when the babies came too fast or died out of their arms. And a few games of cards in the evening, a play now and then merry enough to keep one laughing. No, it would never have done for Lilian.

And she would feel out of place in the life to which the girl aspired. She would never get quite at ease with these refined friends whose talk was of books and music and the part great men and women were playing in the world.

How many times does one have a foreshadowing of the real things that affect life! One may be heavy hearted for days groping about fearsomely and suddenly the cloud lifts without any misfortune. Then swift in the happiest hour comes the stroke that crushes one. Lilian looked straight ahead in her life. She would serve her time here and repay Mrs. Barrington for her generous kindness.

In a lovely old town like Mount Morris, the lines of caste get unconsciously drawn. Where people have lived hundreds of years and can trace back to some titled ancestor perhaps, where they have never known the hard grind of poverty, but have worked on the higher lines. There had been several noted clergymen, two bishops, scholars, senators and even an ambassador abroad. There was no especial pride in this, it was simply what was to be expected of sons growing up in this refined, upright and moral atmosphere. But they sometimes passed rather proudly by those of the next lower round who bent their energies to money making.

Lilian had soon come to understand that and her personal pride kept her aloof from any chance of snubs. But she would want

a wider world presently that was not bounded by a grandfather or a fortune that had descended through generations.

There were moments when Mrs. Boyd's confession seemed a feverish dream. She did not dare build anything on it, because she had indulged in some romantic dreams and longings, because there had been wounded vanity almost to a sense of shame, she held herself to a strict account. No matter what she might gain here, she would always be considered Mrs. Boyd's daughter. She had not expected to be received with the young ladies of the school, and had taken no notice of the little rudenesses that might have had a better excuse if she had been trying to crowd in. So all the refinements of birth and education did not always conduce to the higher generosity of heart.

Miss Arran came gently in the room with an anxious glance toward the bed.

"Mrs. Barrington wishes to see you in the library, Miss Boyd. I will stay here with your mother."

Lilian laid down her work as she rose and said: "Mother is asleep now."

Then she went slowly down the wide stairway, her eyes lingering on some of the panels

that had been painted in by a true artist.

"My dear child," the lady said in a voice that seemed full of emotion, you must have felt from the beginning that I had taken an unusual interest in you. You suggested some person that I could not quite place, but came to know afterward that it was one of my early scholars, a most charming girl. She married happily and had two sons, but they both longed for a daughter. Providence listened to their prayers and sent them a double portion, two lovely girls. My friend's husband was a soldier stationed on the frontier and in an Indian raid was quite severely wounded. It was not deemed best to risk moving him and she resolved to go out to him. One of the babies, the first born was larger and stronger than the other, and she determined to take this one with a most excellent nurse she had. You heard the story Mrs. Boyd told. My friend was in the same frightful accident—the nurse was killed outright, but the baby by some miracle had not so much as a scratch. The only other baby was crushed beyond recognition."

Lilian sprang up, then the room seemed to swim round. She caught at the chair back to steady herself and gave a great gasp.

"Oh, and my mother, Mrs. Boyd, took the child, but they all thought the nurse the real mother. And, oh—she could not bear to give up the baby. Oh, you must forgive her."

"In the confusion I can see that it was very easily done. Dr. Kendricks went out at once. He found the mother gravely injured and the word was that the baby was dead. It was beyond recognition. Mrs. Boyd, who had only been stunned, had gone on her way. You have heard her side of the story, knowing the other side when Miss Arran detailed it, we sent for Dr. Kendricks and pieced it all together. You have been so occupied with your supposed mother, and I must say you have been a devoted daughter, that you have hardly noted our excitement and interest. The confession established the facts beyond a doubt in our minds, but we were not sure how the father would take it. And the place has altered immeasurably; there have been so many accidents since, that that has passed into oblivion. But no one can dispute the proof. Your mother was a noticeably handsome girl; but there is a curious resemblance, and it grows upon one.

"And I am scarcely handsome at all," the girl said, slowly.

"Have you no curiosity to know whom you belong to?" studying Lilian intently.

"Oh, I dare not ask, I hardly dare believe! It is so mysterious. She, yes, I will call her mother, though there might be a father somewhere. And was that beautiful woman they believed dying——"

Lilian clasped her hands over her eyes. Like a flash it seemed to pass before her. Zay Crawford's double, some of the girls had called her.

"Oh," she cried, "can I endure it? What if they do not want me?"

"If they had doubted the story it would have been kept from you. Can you guess—"

Lilian flung herself in Mrs. Barrington's arms, with a long, dry sob.

"Oh, do not give me up," she cried imploringly. "Let me stay with you. I will serve you faithfully for I love you, and these people are strangers——"

"Think, what it must be after her years of sorrow to clasp her child in her arms; to know that it had been well cared for, tenderly loved. Oh, she is your own mother and you will come to love her dearly. This morning

Dr. Kendricks was to tell Major Crawford the story. Fifteen minutes ago word came that they would be here. Lilian, your father feels hard toward Mrs. Boyd. You know Dr. Kendricks would have recognized you if she had not taken you away, and it is only natural that he should feel indignant."

"Must I see him before she—she cannot last long. Oh, she must not hear this, and I will not leave her until the very last."

Then the child suggested her father.

"There they come," exclaimed Mrs. Barrington.

The two men entered the drawing room. Lilian clung to Mrs. Barrington, but that lady impelled her forward.

"This is your daughter, Major Crawford," she said, "and this, my dear, is your own father."

Lilian stood like a statue. It was as if she was turning to stone. Oh, he could not deny her. The clear cut features, the golden bronze hair, the proud figure that seemed to add dignity to the whole. So, her mother had stood, in girlhood.

"Oh, my child! my child! have you no word of gladness for me after these long years! The baby I never saw—my Marguerite."

Was her tongue frozen and her lips stiff? Oh, what should she say? How could she welcome this stranger?

"And that cruel woman has stolen your love from us, as she stole your beautiful body. Oh, where is she? Let me see her!"

"You were to keep calm, Major," exclaimed the doctor. We have gone over all this, and the poor woman is dying. To upbraid her now would be nothing short of murder."

The Major glanced wildly around. "Why think of *our* loss and sorrow. She *knew* the child was not hers. And she ran off like a thief in the night. Oh, I can't forgive her."

"Oh, you must," cried the girl with the first gleam of emotion she had shown. "For she mistook the nurse for the mother. Everything must have been in confusion. She thought of me as a motherless baby, perhaps to be cast on charity——"

"But all these years! And poverty, when a lovely home awaited you; brothers and a sweet sister and such a mother! Oh, she ought to know and suffer for the crime."

"She was almost crazy with her own grief. And she was good and tender and devoted to me. She shall not suffer for it in her dying moments."

She stood there proudly, her face a-light with a sort of heroic devotion. So her mother would have taken up any wrong. Was he unduly bitter?

"Oh, my darling, have you no love for me? No want for your own sweet mother—"

Something in his pleading tone touched her and his face betrayed strong agitation. His arms seemed to hang listlessly by his side. She took a few steps toward him and then they suddenly clasped her in a vehement embrace.

The doctor glanced at Mrs. Barrington and they both left the room.

"It has been a hard fight," he said. "He was so enraged at first that I was afraid he would come and have it out with the dying woman. The fact that she knew the child was not hers and yet took it away seemed to stir all the blood in his body. Poor thing—one has to feel sorry for her; but he raged over the privations he thought his child had endured, and her being here in an equivocal position. The Crawfords were always very proud. And one could not expect a girl just in the dawn of womanhood to fly to a strangers arms."

"Yet it took her so by surprise, and she has a proud, reticent nature."

"Let us go and see Mrs. Boyd."

Major Crawford felt the girl's heart beating against his own. He raised the face and kissed it, amid tears, deeply touched.

"You must forgive me. You do not know what it is to have some one stand between you and your child all these years. I used to dream how it would have been with twin girls running about, climbing one's knees, doing a hundred sweet and tender things. Zay has been so lovely, so loving; but all these years we never forgot you. We gave the most fervent thanks for your mother's recovery, and when you are safe in her arms—oh, it seems almost as if it was too much joy."

"It is so strange," and her voice was tremulous. "For I never could have dreamed of anything like this. I did not dream, for it seemed as if a man who had lost wife and child would want to begin over again, and in a good many ways I tried to believe I had been too visionary—longing for things quite beyond my reach. So I have been praying that God would send what was best for me and trying to make myself content. Oh, are you quite sure there is no mistake?"

and there was a pitifully beseeching sound in her voice.

If we can believe that thief of a woman. Oh, to think she should carry away our baby and leave us her little dead child, and the only half conquered passion flamed up in his face again.

"But, you see, if I had been the nurse's child as she thought, the poor nurse who was dead, it would be a brave and tender act——"

"I have no pity for her. You must come away. Oh, Marguerite, there is your own sweet mother, who when she hears will want to clasp you to her heart at once. And Zaidee, your twin sister——"

She shrank and stiffened a little. Zaidee Crawford would not be so glad to welcome her. She felt it in her inmost heart. For she had been the pet and darling of the household all these years. All the girls had paid her a curious sort of homage. She had been invested with a halo of romance, and generous as she seemed with her equals, she had established a rigorous distance between them. Lilian fancied she was annoyed by the suggestion of a resemblance between them.

Her father was momentarily piqued by

the unyielding lines of her figure and the hesitancy.

"Oh, my child you must take in the strength, the absolute reality of our claim, unless you cannot believe this woman—"

"I would stake my very life on her truth, and I can recall so many things that seemed strange to me then, especially these last two years. She so dreaded leaving me alone in the world, and I am not willing to embitter her last moments. You see she never thought of my parents being in a much higher walk in life, and the knowledge that she had kept me out of so much would be a cruel stab. No, let me wait until it is all over, and you have accepted the strange story truly. There are others beside yourself——"

Her eyes were full of tears as she raised them. It *was* noble to take this view, though he really grudged it.

"You mean then to stay here until—"

"I have promised sacredly, solemnly. There may be some things to certify. Mrs. Barrington spoke of one, that the confession, ought to be signed before witnesses."

"Yes, though we should never doubt. And if there was any question there might be a legal adoption;" then he paused. His wife

had not heard the story yet. Yes, his anger had hurried him along with scarcely a thought of all that needed to be done. He had dreamed of the joy of bringing the mother and daughter together. Yes, she must be prepared.

"Perhaps you are right," he admitted, reluctantly. "Yet—oh, how can I leave you. It seems as if the joy would vanish."

"I do not think I shall vanish," and she half smiled through her tears.

The doctor came downstairs with a grave face.

"There has been a sudden change. The paralysis has crept upward. She is moaning for you. Go to her."

Lilian flashed out of the room.

"Are you convinced?" asked the doctor.

"Oh, positively. And what a noble girl! I hate to have her love that woman so, and yet it shows a true and generous nature. Why, I think some girls would have gone wild over the prospect."

"Mrs. Barrington is enthusiastic about her and she has had a wide experience with girls. But my dear Major, there is a good deal to be done. Your wife must hear the story, and we must consider *her* health, her nervous system must not have too severe a shock. And this

Mrs. Boyd must attest her confession in some way. She can hardly speak intelligibly. With your permission, I'll hunt up Ledwith. It's best to have everything secure."

"Yes, yes. And, doctor, I want to apologize for my anger and unreason this morning. Why, we are half brutes after all. I believe I could have almost murdered that woman for stealing my darling baby and sneaking off without a word of inquiry. I do not yet see how Marguerite can forgive her for keeping her out off her birthright all these years; for dragging her through poverty and all kinds of menial labor; and here she was the caretaker's daughter! Think of it—my child, Zay's sister! Even now when the child pleads for her so earnestly I cannot really forgive her. Will you pardon me for my outbreak? My child is tenderer and more generous than I."

"The poor woman has come to the last stages. It is a matter of only a few days. It would be cruel to part them now."

"You are all against me," with a sad smile.

"You must go home and explain this matter to Mrs. Crawford, and to your sister. Then send the confession to Ledwith. I will see him. And, oh, I promised to drop in and see Zay. She has some nervous crochet in her head."

"Is she really ill?" the father asked in alarm.

"She has some cold and a little fever. Don't excite her."

They walked away together. The doctor found Zay's fever much higher and she was in a state of great excitement.

"Oh, what has happened," she cried. "What was papa so angry about? And you took him away——"

"A matter of business that he could not look at reasonably at first. And it may be a delightful surprise for you, so you must do your utmost to get well. Men have many bothers, my dear."

"It was not about Vincent?"

"Oh, dear, no. There was a telegram from him. He reached West Point all right, and all is going well. Now, I shall give you a composing draught and order you to sleep all the afternoon."

"And the fever?" tremulously.

"That's simply cold and nervousness. You will be about well tomorrow," and he laughed.

"Mrs. Barrington was—oh, I suppose the girls who staid had a dull time."

"I didn't hear any complaints. I guess they are all right. Don't you worry about them or anybody."

If she could hear that Louie Howe was well; maybe Phil would write tomorrow. Oh, she couldn't be seriously ill or the doctor wouldn't be so indifferent about it. If she only could go to sleep and forget about the Clairvoyant's awful den!

CHAPTER XII

OH, WILL I BE WELCOME?

There was a late luncheon and then the Major returned to his wife's sitting room where Aunt Kate was keeping her company with some exquisite needlework for her darling, Zay, who had insisted upon being left alone.

"I have a curious story to read to you that concerns us all. I am glad to have you here, Kate, as a sort of ballast. It was what excited me so this morning and I was very unreasonable. The doctor threatened to put me in a straight jacket."

Aunt Kate laughed. Mrs. Crawford studied her husband intently.

"Oh, go on with your work. I shall feel more composed." He turned his chair a little, ostensibly for the light, but so that his wife might not watch his face.

He began with Mrs. Boyd's list of misfortunes after her few years of happiness and her resolve to go out to her brother's. At times he stumbled over the poor penmanship and halted.

"Why, it must have been the train I was on," interrupted Mrs. Crawford. "I remember

there was a woman with a delicate looking child. I believe ours were the only two babies. Oh, if I had not taken my little darling! But she was so well and strong, such a fine happy baby, and nurse Jane was so good."

Mrs. Boyd had hurried briefly over the terrible collision.

"Everett," interrupted his sister with an indignant emphasis, why recall that awful happening. It can do us no good now."

Mrs. Crawford leaned her head on her hand and balanced her elbow on the broad arm of the chair.

The Major's voice shook slightly. Mrs. Boyd had been quite graphic about her calling for the baby, her care of it from midnight to the next morning and settling her mind to what the woman had said; her resolve to keep the child when she heard the other mother had been killed. She sprang up suddenly.

"Oh, it was nurse Jane who was killed. And she took my baby, my darling. Oh, who was she? Can we ever find her?"

Then she fainted and her husband caught her in his arms.

"Oh, you have killed her!" cried Miss Crawford. "How could you recount that awful time of suffering, and that the woman

should steal the baby! Oh, that was just it, there's no use mincing matters!"

It was some minutes before Mrs. Crawford regained consciousness, then she gazed imploringly in her husband's face.

"Oh, tell me—where is my darling? Is she really alive. Can we find her?"

"She has been found. She is well and in good hands. Oh, my dear wife, I felt vengeful at first, but I have come to pity the poor thing. Marguerite pleaded for her. And we must be thankful that she had the courage to confess the matter."

"Then—you have seen her?"

The voice was shaken with emotion.

"She is at Mrs. Barrington's."

"Oh, can't we go to her? My dear baby, my darling Marguerite! Why, it is almost as if she had been sent from heaven."

"My dear—" her husband caught her in his arms or she would have fallen in her eagerness. "Oh, it will all come right, but you must be patient and get stronger. There are reasons why she cannot come, or you cannot go, and you must hear the rest of the story."

"Everett," began his sister, "how do you *know* but that this is a scheme to extort money. How can you be sure it is your child?

There are so many swindlers or blackmailers in the world."

He was arranging his wife on the couch, thankful she had borne the tidings so well. Then he seated himself beside her, bending over to kiss the pallid lips.

"There can scarcely be any chance for fraud. No one would profit by it, and now, shall I go on with the story?"

They both acquiesced.

There was something so pathetic in the fostermother's love for the child and her fear of its being cast on the world as no one seemed to know anything about the supposed mother. Then her return to her early home; her struggles against misfortune, poverty and ill health, and after a little, her dismay at finding the child so different from what she had been herself, so ambitious, so longing for refinement and showing such a distaste for common ways. The failure of her own health, the impossibility of keeping the girl at school any longer when Mrs. Barrington's proffer had seemed a perfect godsend. But it was too late to recover the health that had been so shattered by poverty and hard work.

"Well, if it *is* true she was a courageous woman," declared Miss Crawford. "One

can't forgive her for taking the child without making a single inquiry."

"But everything was in such confusion, and you will remember that Marguerite lay unconscious for a long while, just hovering between life and death. And at that time, in the western countries there were not so many safeguards. When Dr. Kendricks reached the place, Jane and the baby had been temporarily buried. Yes, it was easy for the thing to happen when Mrs. Boyd wanted the baby so much. I can hardly forgive her, but we must admit that the confession showed an earnest desire to repair the wrong."

"Where is she?"

"At Mrs. Barrington's. Dr. Kendricks thinks she can last but a few days longer and the child is resolved to stay until the end. I tried to shake her determination but found it useless."

"I admire her for it," said Mrs. Crawford.

"I should doubt her fervent love if it could be transferred so easily from poverty to wealth. Yes, I am proud of my dear daughter whom I have not seen in fifteen years. But the whole story is marvellous."

"And yet there is nothing impossible about

it. We can see how simply it all happened."

"What is she like?"

Mrs. Barrington was quite puzzled about a resemblance to some one, and she thinks it you. She has not the radiant beauty of your girlhood, neither has she the dazzling charm of Zay. Oh, I think she is the most like Willard; rather too grand for a girl of sixteen, with a great deal of dignity. Oh, you should hear Mrs. Barrington talk about her. And how do you suppose she and the doctor kept the secret yesterday! They knew it would disturb our happy Christmas. And *she* was nursing the sick woman."

"Oh, did she know?"

"Not that she was our daughter until this morning. I felt bewildered over it all," and Major Crawford gave a deep drawn sigh.

His wife pressed his hand. Her tears were flowing silently.

"Well—it will be very strange to have her here," remarked Miss Crawford. "But I warn you, Zay will always be the dearest to me."

Twilight was falling around them. Mrs. Crawford would never have her own lights early. This was her favorite hour with her husband. Aunt Kate stole softly to Zay's

room and found her sleeping tranquilly, the fever mostly gone.

"Oh, I wonder how you will take it," she mused. "You have been the darling of the household so long."

For somehow, she was not in a mood to welcome this newcomer. True, there must be the strongest proof or Major Crawford would not have been convinced or allowed himself to get in such a passion with this Mrs. Boyd. But a girl reared amid the commonest surroundings, enduring the straits of poverty, lack of education, no accomplishments, how could she take her place in the front rank of Mount Morris society? And the boys—how would they accept this rusticity and probably self conceit?

Major Crawford and his wife often fell into tender and mysterious confidences at this hour, that were never shared with others. They were very happy in her recovery though the last two years she had suffered very little. But she did not want to depute the care of her daughter growing into womanhood entirely to Aunt Kate who had many worldly aims and prejudices, and who was very proud of her niece's beauty. And now such a load was lifted from her soul that had

never quite forgiven itself for taking her finest baby on the unfortunate journey.

"Oh, I must see her," she cried in a whisper.

"But she will not come here until all is over with that poor woman. I do not see how she can care so much for her."

"My dear, it shows a true and strong regard. Remember it is the only mother she has ever known. To turn at once would show a volatile disposition. I have been afraid of that in Zaidee, who is easily taken with new friends, though I will admit that she does not discard the old ones. But I wish sometimes other people were not so easily attracted by her."

"But she is charming," said the admiring father.

I hope they will love each other. We must expect a little jealously at first. And you think she is not—that her narrow life has not dwarfed her."

"Oh, you should listen to Mrs. Barrington's enthusiasm. You see, it was not an easy place to fill, after all. She was in some of the classes, but she held herself aloof. Then she taught a little among the younger day scholars, and kept a certain supervision in the evening study hour. Her mother's position was a sort of handicap, she was so very meek and

retiring. All woman cannot add dignity to an inferior position, and young people are very apt to take them according to the position. Mrs. Barrington was planning some changes for the new term that would be brought about by the passing away of the poor woman. I think she meant, in a way, to adopt her."

"Oh, she must be worthy, to have made such a friend."

And the mother was wondering, but dared not ask what Marguerite had grown into. She was not like Zay, all the coloring was darker. Willard was fine looking for a young man, but would it not be rather masculine for a girl? She had a fancy for the soft attractiveness in a woman.

Then the light came and dinner. Mrs. Crawford went to Zay's room afterward and found her comfortable and better, with no recurrence of fever, and they had a pleasant little chat.

The next morning a letter came from Phillipa, full of merry nonsense about gifts and gayety and lovers. She was very well, with the very underscored, and two engagements for every evening. She had not heard from Louie, "but I should have if her little

finger had ached; she would have been afraid of some distemper. And I hope you are all having a splendid time."

Afterward Dr. Kendricks came in. Yes, she was better, the throat was all right; there was a slight remnant of the cold, and it would be best to be careful for a few days. Oh, yes, she could dress herself and go about the house, but not out driving.

"You danced a little too much Christmas night, though for the life of me I don't see what you were so nervous about."

She flushed and laughed and felt that she had escaped a great danger.

Then he and the Major set out together, meeting Mr. Ledwith at the school. The doctor went upstairs. Lilian met him with anxious eyes.

"Yes, there has been a great change. She has gone more rapidly than I thought. Can she speak?"

"Hardly. Now and then a word. Yet she understands all that I say to her," Lilian returned, gravely. "But she was quite restless during the night."

He nodded. "You see, my dear Miss Boyd—you will be that until you take your new name, the confession has no signature. It might

never be called in question but sometimes, years afterward, in the various changes of property, it might be necessary to establish a legal identity. Can you make her understand this? And you can attest most of her story. I will call up Mr. Ledwith. And your father is most desirous of being present. He will make no trouble."

She went out in the hall to meet him.

"My dear," he said, "I am more reasonable than I was yesterday. Your lovely mother has placed some views in a different light, and she is most glad that you have never lacked for a fervent love and care. And we both forgive her."

"Oh, thank you for that. Though Mrs. Barrington advises that she had better not be told of the discovery. You see she is so tranquil now, knowing that I am provided for."

Then they entered the room. Mrs. Boyd scarcely noticed them, but her eyes questioned Lilian, who began to explain, holding the poor hand in hers. Mrs. Boyd seemed confused at first, then she said with some difficulty—"Yes, yes."

Lilian and Miss Arran pillowed her up in a sitting posture and placed the material on a portable desk.

"It is just to sign your name."

She seemed to listen as Mr. Ledwith read the affadavit, and nodded, with her eyes on Lilian, who put the pen in her hand, but she could not clasp it.

I think you will have to guide it. She does not understand."

Lilian took the poor shaking hand in hers, and the sick woman looked up into her face and smiled.

It was written, but even Lilian's hand shook a little. "Emma Eliza Boyd."

"That is all, dear," said the girl.

She made a great effort to articulate, and her eyes had a frightened look in them. "You—will not—go?"

"Oh, no, no," returned Lilian, with a kiss.

"Tired—tired," she gasped.

They laid her down and gave her a spoonful of stimulant but she only swallowed a little of it.

The others left the room. Dr. Kendricks shook his head slowly. Mr. Ledwith gave the last page of the confession to Major Crawford. Lilian sat on the side of the bed, chafing the cool hands that had grown more helpless since yesterday, and presently Mrs. Boyd slept, but one could hardly note the breathing.

Mrs. Barrington looked in and beckoned to Lilian.

"Your own mother is here," she said softly. "And I feel like putting in another claim, but I cannot displace the rightful one. You will find her in the library."

Lilian went slowly down. The beautiful woman she had seen in church, the woman who had lain like dead when Mrs. Boyd glanced upon her, the mother who had missed her all these years! The tall figure rose with the softness of a cloud longing to embrace the moon, with arms outstretched, and the child went to them in the caress of divine satisfaction. For this was the mother of her dreams and ideals, and their souls were as one.

They kissed away each others tears.

"I felt that I *must* come, that I *must* see you. But I am not going to take you away, much as I long for you, since you have a sacred duty here. When that is finished we will begin our lives together. At first, your father was mad with jealously that *she* should have dared to love you so much, but now he is glad as I am that you did not suffer from coldness or indifference. That would have broken my heart."

"And I am afraid I did not always return love for love. I was always dreaming, desiring something I had not. She worked for me all

those early years. I had resolved as soon as was possible to be her caretaker, to put in her life the things she desired, whether they pleased me or not. It did not take much to make her happy.

"And no man can understand the longing of a woman's soul when her child has been torn from her arms. Poor empty arms, that no prayer can fill. And this was why she snatched at the baby, believing it was motherless. Yes, I forgave her and so did he when he came to look at it in the true light. Some women, when times pressed hard in work and poverty, would have placed you in an institution——"

"Oh, I think she would have starved first!" interrupted the girl, vehemently.

"And now, if God grants it, we may have a long, satisfying life together. For He has given me back my health like a miracle, as we had thought it could never be, and were quite resigned. And now He has restored all that we missed, given us the oil of joy for mourning. Oh, child, let me look at you. As a baby you were so different from Zaidee, it hardly seemed as if you could be twins; and you are taller, yes, you are more like Willard. But you have my eyes, and I never was fairy-like.

Oh, I hope you girls will love each other, and I want you to love me with all your heart to make up for those years that have fallen out of our lives."

The exquisitely soft, silvery laugh was music to the girl's heart. Yes, this was the ideal mother. Was there some secret quality in heridity, after all?

They talked on and on. She wanted to hear more particulars of her daughter's life, but Lilian softened some of the roughest places, the fights she had had with herself, when she felt she must give up her cherished school, the pleasure of coming to an atmosphere like this, the warm interest of Mrs. Barrington.

"And now I must leave you," said the mother, "but I take with me a delightful hope. When your duty is done here, and I appreciate your doing it, you will find your true home in my heart and my home. Oh, I think you will never be able to understand all my joy."

She rose and wiped away her tears. Yes, she was beautiful enough to adore. Her own mother! It thrilled every pulse.

"Oh, my dear, let us both thank God for this restoration. It is like a heavenly dream. I must have time to get used to it."

Lilian watched her as she stepped into the phaeton, with its handsome bays and the silver mountings. And Zaidee could have every wish gratified; friends, music, travel. It was there for her, also. She had never dreamed of that.

CHAPTER XIII

A MOTHER'S LOVE

Mrs. Boyd had not stirred. Lilian bent over her and found the breathing very faint. Miss Arran sat by the window and merely glanced up. The girl buried her face in the pillow and heard again the soft, finely modulated voice, the clasp of the hand that meant so much, the promise for tomorrow.

"If they were not so rich," her musings ran, "If I could do something for her. Oh, it seems too much. If we could go away —but to face all the girls, to hear the comments."

"Miss Boyd, can you spare me a few moments," said Mrs. Dane. "Mrs. Arran will watch."

Lilian followed to Mrs. Dane's room.

"Miss Boyd, I have an apology to make to you, and I am honest enough to confess it. I can't just tell why, but I did take a dislike to you and your mother. She seemed very weak and as if she was afraid a baleful secret might come to light, and you were the master mind holding some curious power over her."

"Oh, it was not that," cried Lilian, eagerly. "It was because in her simple life she had not been accustomed to the usages that obtained in the larger world. Often I did guide her a little. She was very timid."

"And it seemed to me—of course I understand it now, that you held your head quite too high for your mother's daughter. I was brought up to do my duty in that station of life to which it should please God to call me, and not try to get out of it. You seemed above it—somehow——"

"Oh, did I act that way? I was only trying to do *my* duty to the classes and to Mrs. Barrington. I did not mean to seem above my station," and there was sob in her voice.

"My dear, don't cry. My apology would not be worth half so much if I held back part of the price. I think I was a little jealous of Mrs. Barrington's favor for you, as I had a curious suspicion that something not quite orthodox might come out about you, that you really were not her child. You see I was not so far out of the way after all, and that evening I accused you of having gone to the Clairvoyants—we had just heard the death was from maligant scarlet fever. It would have ruined the school for a long while to have

it break out here, you know. If the person had come out in the open so that I could have seen, but her darting back, and I think there was more than one. It seems even now as if it did look like you, but it might have been because it was like the Tam you wore. And you appeared so embarrased over it."

"Oh, could you believe that I would have told such a falsehood?" she cried, hurt to the very quick.

"We thought it best to take precautions. Then Mrs. Boyd had her stroke and then came her confession and all that has happened since. Your devotion to that poor woman was enough to stamp the nobleness of your character, and it is not because you are Major Crawford's daughter that I say this—that I am ashamed of my prejudices and beg you to forgive me. Mrs. Barrington was right from the beginning and you are worthy of the best of fortune."

"Oh, Mrs. Dane—" and her voice broke.

"I should have felt myself contemptible if I had not made this amends, and now if you will shake hands with me——"

"Gladly. And I thank you for the kindliness towards my—yes, she *was* my mother all these years and the sympathy you showed

me even before it was proved who my real father was."

"And I wish you much joy and happiness, which you will surely have. And you will be fitted to grace any position. You will have one of the loveliest of women for a mother, and two brothers who, so far, have been most exemplary. And that darling, Zay—the whole town loves her."

Lilian wiped her eyes, and pressed Mrs. Dane's hand fervently. Would Zay proffer her a sister's love?

She went back to Mrs. Boyd, who suddenly opened her eyes and smiled, then the thin lids fell. How she had wasted away! She tried to recount to herself all the kindnesses, the sacrifices Mrs. Boyd had made. And though the boarding house had been of the commonest sort there had never seemed any real pinches. She had even saved up money. It was the long illness and the changes incident to it that had not only reduced their little store, but broken her health and made her fearful of the future. She had taken up the sewing then. Four years there had been of that. Lilian remembered how proud she had been to enter the High School among the best scholars.

And some day she would teach. It was such

a delightful vision. She studied other things beside the ordinary lessons. She loved to play and at times when she had turned her brain almost upside down she ran out and had a game of tag with the girls.

There were other evenings when she overcast long seams and pulled bastings, and the last year she had learned to sew on the machine. With scanty living and steady work, her mother had dropped down and down. But she was glad she had offered to go in the shop. When matters were a little easier she might try night school she had thought.

And this beautiful school was like an entrance into a land of romance. The luxurious living, at least it seemed so to her, would soon restore her mother's health. The duties were light. She had time for reading and oh, the lovely things! She did at times wish there had been some other position for her mother, like that of Miss Arran's. But she understood that Mrs. Boyd could not fill that. She lacked something, she had no real dignity, no self-assertion. She allowed the girls to order her, and Lilian wondered how these rich girls, who in some respects had polished manners, could be so ill bred. For somehow she understood the difference.

There were several with whom she might have been good friends, but she was too proud to step outside of what she considered her real station.

And now this wonderful event had come to her and she seemed to undertsand the thoughts and feelings that had been such a mystery. When she had been clasped to her true mother's heart, it appeared to her as if a veil had been drawn aside, and she had stepped into a larger room, replete with all she had vaguely dreamed about. That Crawford House was one of the fine old places, she knew, but she never thought of that luxurious living where all the tomorrows had been provided for. She would have gone to the simplest cottage for that mother's love.

Would Zaidee Crawford give her a sister's warm welcome? She would never grudge her anything money could buy; but she, Lilian, must seem like an interloper to them. And to share her mother's love with a stranger!

Miss Arran entered the room.

"You ought to go to bed, Miss Boyd. I will sit here and watch. Your mother seems asleep."

Lilian changed her dress for a comfortable wrapper, kissed her mother's forehead and

pressed the cold hands. She did not stir; but then she had lain this way for hours at a time. The girl drew up her cot to the side of her mother's bed and laid down. The clocks all about were striking midnight.

It had not been so tranquil at Crawford House. Dinner had been rather quiet; no one seemingly to want to talk at any length. Afterward, Major Crawford had said—

"Let us all go up to mother's room. I have a singular explanation to make to you two children. Aunt Kate has known it these two days."

"There has seemed something mysterious in the air," exclaimed Willard, "only I am sure nothing worse has happened to mother. She looks so extraordinarily happy, and Zay is about again."

"We must go back to the time of the accident," began the Major. We thought we had overlived the sorrow and we had never expected any joy for the outcome."

He paused to steady his voice, then began the story of the other woman, the only passenger who carried an infant, her hours of unconsciousness, her hearing the cry of the child and claiming it and then learning that the woman she believed its mother had been

killed and full of pity forit, since her own had been mangled and carried away, resolved to take it and care for it. She left the next day—"

"Oh, you don't mean she took our baby," cried Willard passionately, his eyes aflame.

"She took our baby. She has cared for it all these years through poverty and failing health and now that she is dying, she thought the child ought to know. They have been at Mrs. Barrington's since some time in August."

Zaidee sprang up, but her face was ghostly pale and there was a tremulous protest in her voice.

"Oh, it is that Mrs. Boyd, the caretaker and her daughter!" she exclaimed, drawing a long strangling breath full of protest.

"Our daughter," said her father with emphasis." Then he went on to relate how the matter had been brought to his notice and his unreasonable anger at first as he could not doubt the story vouched for by Doctor Kendricks, his interview with the child and Mrs. Barrington, Mrs. Crawford's visit to her yesterday.

"What a wonderful story!" Willard sprang

up and began to pace the floor. "I suppose it *is* true. That baby couldn't have died and she adopted another one."

"How do we know that she did not?" said Miss Crawford, protestingly.

"She was anxious that the girl in some manner might find her father's people. You see, she was sure the mother was dead. Oh, there is enough to convince you all. Dr. Kendricks and Mr. Ledwith have no doubt of the truth of her story. There is no scheme in it. And it was thought best, in her weakened state, not to try any explanations."

"It was nurse Jane who died, and the dead baby was buried with her. Ah, one glance at the girl would convince you," said the mother in the tenderest voice.

"But—why didn't she come here at once?"

"She was very noble about it. And this is another factor in the story. She would not leave the mother who had worked and toiled for her; so you see she was not tempted by the thought of advancement. She was afraid to believe the outcome of the story at first. Oh, I am proud of her, though at first I was really cruel. I wanted the woman punished."

"After all," said Willard, "if the baby had been friendless and an orphan it would have been very noble in her."

"You shall read her confession some day. It is pathetic. She thought she had lost her all and clung to the baby. Oh, we must all forgive her."

"And what do you mean to do?" asked Miss Crawford. "It is going to make a great stir for it cannot be kept a secret, and I hate gossip about families."

"Yes, the thing must be explained. I have given what of the story I want known to a reporter this afternoon. After the poor woman has gone, Marguerite will come here to her true home and life."

"Why, Zay, you must have known her at the school," said Willard. "It seems she was studying——"

"Oh, they are all on the other side away from the boarders. She was in the study room an hour in the evening, with the smaller girls. We were all at a different table that we had to ourselves. And—somehow, I never saw much of her. I didn't have to go to Mrs. Boyd for my mending."

Aunt Kate had put her arm about Zay at the beginning of the story. The mother noted with a pang that there was no real welcome in this daughter's face. Was it jealousy?"

Willard stood between his parents and laid a hand on the shoulder of each.

"Oh," in a voice freighted with emotion. "I can't tell you how glad and thankful I am that this sorrow of years is to be turned into such a great all-pervading joy. We will be a perfect family again. Why, it will be the romance of our lives! It almost makes me wish I were not going away. And since you have seen her and are satisfied—mother——"

He stooped to kiss her.

"Oh," she returned, brokenly, "I want you all to love her, and be patient with Zay. She has always been first so long."

"I think if I was a girl I'd be wild to have a sister to tell things to—the little things a fellow tells his sweetheart, I suppose, when he has one," laughing. "Vin and I discuss our gettings along and our hopes and some funny scrapes that boys get into. But girls look at the romantic side. And you can't think—but *I'm* proud of this romance. Why, it will be something to tell over to our children, and father's been a trump, but I think its a good deal owing to you. Oh, I hope *she* is like you."

The mother smiled as she kissed him.

Zay came to say good-night. Her face had grave lines that were not wont to be there.

"Oh, my darling," the mother said, "this is one of the things that cannot make any

difference in our love for you. And if you could only understand the burthen it had lifted off my soul. A hundred times I have said: 'Oh, why did I take baby Marguerite on that journey?' She was so strong and well and I was so proud of her, I wanted your father to see her."

"And you will be proud of her again. She is going to be a fine scholar, and I'm just pretty to look at, that's all! I can't make myself love anyone all in a moment," and she gave a little sob.

"My child, the love will come if you do not steel your heart against it. Think, Zay, a twin sister——"

"But she is larger, different and a sort of story heroine. Everyone will be interested in her and I shall be pushed quite to the wall."

"Oh, Zay, you are a foolish little girl. But you have had all the admiration and love, and we must wait patiently until you understand that love can never be impoverished by giving. Think of this, pray for a generous heart, and let her love you."

Aunt Kate was waiting in her room. And Zay's overcharged heart gave way to a passion of weeping on the friendly bosom.

"Dear, I know how hard it is to be crowded

out. Of course everyone will flock around her for a while and never having had much admiration she will be the more eager for it. And as will be perfectly natural when the first interest is worn off, the real grain will be apparent and I dare say she will show her common breeding. Why, this Mrs. Boyd had next to no education. I shouldn't want anyone to see that so-called confession, but I dare say your father will keep it close enough, for he would be ashamed to have any one see it. I'm sorry the story had to get abroad, but your father thought there would be so many surmises, and perhaps, exaggerations. It's a horrid thing to live through, but your mother is so much happier. Why, she seemed ten years younger. And you will always have a staunch friend in me. No one can oust you from my heart if she had all the gifts of the nine graces. Oh, you will come back to your rightful place, never fear."

But Zay wept herself to sleep with an ache in her heart that crowded out all tender feelings.

After a long while Lilian Boyd fell asleep and there came no disturbance. Just at daylight Miss Arran leaned over the bed and touched the cold face, felt for the heart.

There was ot the faintest motion. There had not been a sound or a sigh, she had just lapsed into her dreamless sleep. She summoned Mrs. Dane.

"It is much better so. There will be nothing painful to remember," said that lady.

"Mother, mother!" and Lilian roused suddenly.

"My dear," said Miss Arran, "she has gone to her rest in the most peaceful manner. The doctor said it might be so, and you have done your full duty. My dear, you can go to your own mother's arms with the clearest conscience. I am glad, we are all glad that you elected to stay, though your father, in his first indignation, would have swept you away. I hardly see how you won your way. Come to Mrs. Dane's room and have a cup of coffee."

She gave one long look at the still face. Oh, how thin and worn it was, yet there was a certain peacefulness that comforted the girl. Mrs. Barrington came in and kissed her tenderly. "It is all as we would have it," she said. "And whatever mistake Mrs. Boyd might have made must be balanced by the thought that if there had been no one, as she believed, she would have taken you to her heart just as gladly, done for you with the same cheerful-

ness. This is what she did; you must always keep it in mind. And now—can you help make some arrangements? Whatever money is needed——"

"Oh, Mrs. Barrington, I think there will be enough. She still had some of her insurance money that she had used only in emergencies. And we have needed so little here. Oh, you have all been so kind," in her grateful, broken voice.

Then Dr. Kendricks was announced.

"I supposed it would be that way," he said.

"Shall I make arrangements for the funeral. There is no one, I suppose——"

"It is too far away from her old friends for any of them to come, and I am sure Lilian would like it as simple and quiet as possible. I should say tomorrow morning. No one will go out of curiosity."

"Then I will see about it at once. The Major is all impatience to have his daughter."

"You must come and share my room," Mrs. Barrington said to Lilian.

"Oh, she really doesn't seem any different to me," the girl returned. "She has slept so much the last few days, and it is what we have expected. God has taken her in His keeping and she will have those belonging to her. It is a blessed thought."

She sat reading by the window when the Crawford phæton drove up. Her first feeling was that she could not meet her father. But a young man sprang out and the coachman took charge of the horses.

"It is your brother," announced Mrs. Barrington. "Oh, do try and see him. Your mother wishes it so much."

Lilian went down and was clasped to her mother's heart and held there many seconds.

"This is your brother Willard, who is soon to leave for Washington and he begged so much to see a little of you. His will be a three years' cruise, and I am doubly glad to have found another child in view of his long absence."

Lilian glanced up. It was such a frank, kindly face, too young yet for any of his father's sternness.

"Oh, my dear, I wonder if you will ever understand how precious you are going to be to us all. It is like one raised from the dead. I shall go away with a lighter heart, seeing that mother and father have you. We boys have been so much to the house with our stirring interests; now it will be you and Zaidee. I shall think of you so often. Why, I can readily believe any fairy story, and it almost breaks

father's heart that you have been so near all these months and none of us known it. You will not feel hurt if he sometimes should show a little—" he paused with a flush. "For after all it might have been her child who was saved——" and she felt the shiver go over him.

"And to know that you were loved all these years," said the mother holding out her arms, and both children went to them. "And that you never really suffered for anything. Sometimes I hardly dare believe in and accept this great blessing."

"Oh, I hope I will prove a blessing," Lilian said, with a great tremble in her voice. "You are so good to take me in, to love and trust me, knowing so little about me."

For of late she had been learning how much children could be to parents.

"But I think Mrs. Barrington had opportunities of knowing," returned her mother with a warm pressure, and fond smile.

Willard had been studying her. "There's something about her like you, mother, and something that recalls Vincent. Oh, won't he be surprised! He will want to fly home again. Oh, you will not mind if Zaidee carries off the family beauty. She is such a dear!

And we ought to have one star of the goodly Crawford family."

"I am glad, and I thought her lovely at the first glance. Why, the girls are quite wild about her. I shall not mind anything so long as you all love me. Oh, I will try to deserve it."

There were tears in her eyes and her mother kissed her tenderly. Then they talked about her coming home which could not be until her whole duty was performed and there was no omission to think of.

Yet they went lingeringly, loth to leave her.

"She has a great deal of character;" said Willard. "She seems more mature than Zay. I am glad they are not alike, though it seems rather out of the order for twins. Oh, mother, I can foresee that she will be a great deal to *you* in a womanly way. We can never thank God enough for her."

"And all these years, amid the suffering, I have always thought if I had left my darling at home. I was so proud of her I wanted your father to see her. Zaidee was not such a fine looking baby. We had both so ardently desired a daughter; indeed we had often said two boys and two girls was an ideal family."

"And I wouldn't give up Vin—boys have a

delightful interest in each others' lives and doings. I suppose sisters feel the same way. That is—well, it will be a little strange at first. Zay has been our queen so long, and it can't be quite like living together from infancy."

"No. So we must make allowance for both of them until they reach the true level of birthright. Marguerite is very proud and has unusually well defined ideas of duty, while we have never put anything but love before Zay. I expect we have spoiled her."

Mount Morris was startled in the midst of its Christmas festivities by the remarkable announcement that Marguerite, the twin baby of Major and Mrs. Crawford, had been miraculously saved from the wreck, where the nurse and several others had perished. Another passenger whose baby had been killed, thinking the nurse was the true mother of the child, had taken it to her heart out of pity for the helpless little creature, and gone farther westward before real inquiries could be made as to whether there were any relatives living.

Mrs. Crawford had insisted upon softening what her husband had considered a crime on the part of Mrs. Boyd.

"Think how she must have loved the little creature she thought friendless, to burden herself with it. And I am so thankful *my* baby found loving care. Why, she might have perished with neglect through that dreadful time. We can do nothing for her and we will not, must not, traduce her motives, when they were prompted by an overwhelming love."

So it was represented that Mrs. Boyd had taken the position at Mrs. Barrington's that her adopted child might be better educated as her own health was failing, which after all was the truth, though Lilian's pleading had been a special factor.

The poor woman's burial had been quiet, in the early morning. Mrs. Barrington and Miss Arran had gone with Lilian whose great regret had been that there was not sufficient money to send her to Laconia to sleep beside her husband and her little son, but she gave thanks that there was no need of benevolence though Mrs. Barrington had insisted she should supply any need.

She had begged that she might be left at the school over Sunday, and Mrs. Crawford found herself so shaken by all the excitement that she assented the more readily. Zaidee

was quite well again and laughed at herself for having been so easily alarmed. There had been no cases of illness in the town and the clairvoyant had taken her family to a city at some distance.

"It really would be the part of wisdom to go to the city if you felt well enough," Aunt Kate said to her sister-in-law. "Of course there will a good deal of talk, and it is but natural that our friends should desire to see the new daughter of the house. It is a most excellent thing that Dr. Kendricks has been mixed up with it all and can vouch for the truth. And the child might get some training to fit her for her new position."

"Mrs. Barrington has had her in training for some time, and from the very first was attracted by her natural grace and dignity; and her strength of character," was the reply. "and her father found resemblances to me in the first interview!"

"But the years before would naturally leave some impress. Mrs. Boyd, it seems, had not much education, and they must have lived in the commoner streets with all kinds of people. I feel something as brother does, that I can hardly forgive her for robbing the

child of her natural birthright and subjecting her to plebian surroundings.

Mrs. Crawford winced and flushed a little. Her last remembrance of the smiling, cooing baby, bright eyed and full of health and sweetness, never faded from her mind, and she fancied now she should have the same instinctive impressions that had puzzled Mrs. Barrington. Aunt Kate might be rather captious at first, but she could pardon it and understand it as well, for she had been a most devoted mother to Zaidee.

Then, too, school would begin so soon and all these little breaks would bring about the finer claims of relationship.

No one went to church on Sunday. Mrs. Crawford was not quite up to the mark, and Aunt Kate declared she could not face the curious eyes or answer a question. The Major longed to go over to Mrs. Barrington's but some feeling of delicacy restrained him.

Lilian had come home from the lonely burial like one in a strange dream. The brief illness, the excitement of the confession, the quiet passing out of existence had transpired so rapidly that she could hardly make it real. She almost expected to find Mrs.

Boyd lying there on the bed when she entered the room. She felt that Mrs. Boyd had never taken root at Mount Morris; she smiled sadly thinking of Mrs. Dane's suspicions that there was some secret between them, that she, Lilian, was afraid would come to light. But she had never in her wildest moments dreamed of the truth. Mrs. Boyd had all the limitation of a commonplace nature, sweet, devoted, with no lofty aspirations. The refinements of Barrington House wore upon her. She did try, for Lilian's sake, to adapt herself to some of them but the effort was plainly visible to practiced eyes. If she had lived—but then the confession would hardly have been made. For, with all the unlikeness, Lilian had never suspected the truth.

Oh, why had not God given this poor starved life its rightful surroundings? If Mrs. Boyd had lived! If there had been a number of merry, satisfied children going cheerfully to work in shops and factories when school days were over, having lovers, marrying and repeating their mother's life! For the world was full of ordinary happy people with no high ideals. Was there something in heredity?

No, she could not have been content with that destiny. She must have worked and striven for a higher round, for some intellectual advancement. Yet, how many of these girls at school really cared for it with all their advantages? It was not mere money that inspired one, and she almost wished she were not going in that upper atmosphere.

CHAPTER XIV

GOING OUT OF THE OLD LIFE

Lilian had seen very little of her friend, Miss Trenham, through the week, though every day she had been the recipient of a note of sympathy and affection. She came in on Saturday afternoon.

"My dear girl," she began, "so many unusual events have happened to you that one must needs use both congratulations and condolences. I saw the newspaper account and it seems like the finger of Providence that you should have been directed hither and to the arms of your real parents. Mrs. Boyd looked very poorly the last time I saw her, a month or so ago. I suppose there is a great deal back of the account——"

"I have wanted to see you so," returned Lilian, "I thought I would come to the Chapel tomorrow morning. You are the only friend I have made outside of the school, but Mrs. Barrington has been so sweet and generous. She had planned to keep me here after mother was gone and educate me."

The tears stood in Lilian's eyes and her voice broke with emotion.

"There is so much to talk over, and we have gone to our own home now. Mother and I have been very busy the last four days cleaning and putting things in order. We spent our Christmas at Mrs. Lane's and had a really delightful time. We had planned some time ago to have you share it with us, and now can you not spare us Sunday, if you are not going——"

"The change is to be made on Monday. Oh, Miss Trenham—I can hardly describe my feelings. I dread it and yet my own mother is an ideal mother. I hardly dare think of the happiness in store for me, but I shall go on here at school. I am glad of that. I could not give up my dear Mrs. Barrington."

"We want to hear all the story—your side," smiling gravely. "So if you can come and dine with us on Sunday. Oh, there are so many explanations."

"I will see. Excuse me a few moments." Lilian came back with a heartsome expression.

"Yes, I can come. I wanted to go to the Chapel in the morning. I suppose some of my life, at least, will be changed——"

"Yes, but it will be—yes, lovely and advan-

tageous. I never thought Mrs. Boyd quite the right mother for you, if you will allow me to say it."

Lilian flushed. "But she loved me with her whole soul. She would have made any sacrifice to advance me. All these years she has cared for me, worked for me and I should be an ingrate to forget it. If she had lived and this had not come, I was planning to work for her——"

"I think you would, without a demur. You would have had an excellent friend in Mrs. Barrington, but it will be a much wider life, I am very glad for you. There are people for whom prosperity does very little. You will not be one of that kind. In spite of her misfortune your mother has always had a wide and lovely influence, and the home is said to be very attractive. I think all of Mount Morris rejoiced truly in her restoration to health, and you will have some of the best of her life. You will soon learn the sweet lesson of loving her."

"My heart went out to her the Sunday I saw her in church. She looked to me like a saint, and I did not know then, but I have felt bewildered since. And I have been so used to planning to do something for—for

the one who has gone, that I feel kind of helpless, knowing I can do nothing for her."

Oh, yes, you can give her a daughter's choicest love. I am quite sure you two will grow into finest accord, and two manly brothers and that lovely Zaidee! Oh, it will be a most absorbing life. You will be in the sphere just fitted for you. Perhaps God let it all happen that your character should be the more fully shaped by the experience. We will talk it over more, at length, tomorrow.

Miss Trenham rose and kissed the young girl tenderly, knowing that tears were very near the surface. After she had gone Lilian gave way to them. She had not the easily adaptive nature to go in her new home and take the best at once, though it had been held out with such winning tenderness. The beautiful face of Zaidee instead of adding a radiance seemed to shadow the path. She could not explain it to herself; she would not think her sister would grudge her anything, but she felt in her inmost heart it would not be given generously. She must win it by large patience.

Sunday was a perfect winter day with a gorgeous sunshine and a crisp air that seemed to bring refreshment in every waft. The leafless trees were penciled against the

blue sky like the lines of a fine engraving. The church bells rang out their reverent inspiration, they were harmoniously toned and there was no jangling. Lilian wondered a little —were her parents and the two children at home kneeling in the old church where the Crawfords had worshipped for a hundred years or more? Did they offer a little prayer for her?

"The father and mother said it at home. He was all impatience for the day to pass.

Oh, how delightful Mrs. Trenham's warm welcome was, and little Claire clasped both slim arms about Lilian's neck and kissed the cool rosy cheek over and over again. If her sister was little and fond like that!"

"Its been such a long, long while since you were here. Of course you couldn't come while we were away. It was very nice at Mrs. Lane's; there were so many people to make merry. You can't be truly merry alone by yourself, can you? It's like bells ringing. You can be happy thinking of many things, but not merry."

Lilian smiled. Yes, the conceit was true.

Then she must inspect Claire's Christmas gifts. Her own had been a pretty booklet that one of the girls had given her in a per-

functory fashion that carried no real regard with it. She had been too full of anxiety to look up anything.

"And that lady that came here once who wasn't your real mother went away, didn't she? And Edith said you had a real mother now and you were going to live with her and not stay at school all the time. I wish I could go to school. Edith said sometime she might have a school in our own house, and I might come and say lessons with other little girls. That will be so nice. I think that will be merry."

Then they were summoned to dinner, and the elders took the lead in the conversation, expressing their surprise at the strange event they had seen in the paper, and as they lingered over the dessert Lilian told her own story that she had believed in devoutly until Mrs. Boyd had explained her adoption, hoping thereby Lilian might trace her parentage—though Mrs. Boyd supposed only her father could be found. Mrs. Barrington had supplied the other side.

"I suppose there is a certain kind of gratification in belonging to an old and respected family. Major Crawford's family could go back even of their first settling in America,

and the madam was a proud old Virginian with a fortune, but she wanted only one son, and she had three and one daughter. All her love and pride was in her first born who was indulged in every thing and led a gay life. The youngest died, Everard went to West Point and entered the regular army. Reginald took the best of life and became a capricious invalid, as pernurious as he had been wasteful before, and died about the time of the accident. The madam had been dead some years. So all of Crawford House and its belongings came to the Major, who had married one of the loveliest of girls. You have heard that part of the story from Mrs. Barrington, doubtless. She was one of the earlier scholars."

"Yes," replied Lilian. "She admires her, beside loving her for the bravery with which, she bore the dreadful accident."

"I think when the word came, if prayers could have availed for the safety of the child, the whole town would have prayed, and to think that God should have saved you and restored you in this strange manner."

Edith glanced across the table. Lilian's eyes were suffused with tears.

Miss Crawford had looked after the house, as the mother spent much of the time in the

city with Reginald. She was very fond of gayeties, and her sudden death was a great surprise for she seemed vigorous enough to round out the century. Miss Kate took charge of little Zay while her mother was on the journey and through those years spent in hospitals and sanitoriums. She has been most devoted, refusing several good offers of marriage, but I suppose Mrs. Barringotn has told you most of the family history."

"She is very fond of my mother and her girl life, her early married life as well, and she fancied at the very first that I resembled some one she had known."

"There is something in the poise of the head and the shape of your chest and shoulders, that is like her, and it won't hurt you if I say she was an extremely handsome girl. Even Reginald admitted that."

"And I am not handsome," Lilian said bravely, though with a little pang. It had never mattered to her before. Then she turned scarlet and added with an embarrassed laugh: "That sounds like what the girls call fishing for compliments. Zaidee will be the family beauty."

"And you have a voice, that with the proper training, may be very fine, indeed. I noticed it this morning in the hymn."

"Oh, do you think so? I love to sing," and her face was a-light with pleasure. "But it seems to me that it isn't, well—neither alto nor soprano; I can't keep it to a true sound."

It is a contralto and has some most expressive notes in it. Of course, you will be trained in music."

"Mrs. Barrington spoke of it in the next term. Some of the girls sing beautifully. I was to take up several new studies. Oh, there are so many splendid things to learn."

Her face was aglow with enthusiasm and gave promise of something finer than mere beauty. There had been a good deal of repression in her life since she had come to understand, in a measure, her own desires. She had held them back because she did not want to make Mrs. Boyd unhappy with the difference between them, when she saw that the elder woman was making any effort to indulge her fancies, and during these months at school had settled to a grave deportment, that she might better sustain her authority. The lack of spontaneity had puzzled Mrs. Barrington, when in some moments she caught the ardor and glow of an inward possibility.

"I think you will be in the right place now," remarked Edith with a smile. "One with a

strong individuality at times surmounts adverse circumstances, but when there are so many events to hamper, one does lose courage and begins to question whether the effort and sacrifice will pay for the late reward."

"Oh, let me have Miss Lilian awhile," besought Claire. "I want her to inspect my playhouse, while you and mother put away the dishes and things."

The playhouse was an old time cabinet with the doors taken off. One shelf, the highest, was full of curiosities, the next of books, the third left out and the dolls had it to themselves. There was a parlor in one end, a sleeping room in the other and three pretty dolls were in their chairs, ranged round a table, inspecting their Christmas gifts.

"I wouldn't have any new dolls this time," she began, with a touch of weariness in her voice. "For after all you can't make them real. I play school with them. I read them stories. I dress them and take them out riding, but I have to do the talking for them and sometimes it gets so dull. There's too much make-believe. I shall be glad when summer comes and there won't be any bad boys next door. What do you suppose God did with them? They couldn't like heaven, you know, for there

they have to be good all the time. And there are so many beautiful things in summer. The birds and the flowers and the trees waving about and the sky so full of mysterious things. Great islands go sailing about and I wish I was on one of them. I get so tired, sometimes. I don't suppose I'll ever have any strong back and legs until I do get to heaven. But I'd like to go about in this world. I want a fairy godmother; that is it."

She gave a little laugh but there were tears in her eyes.

"And you've found a fairy godmother, haven't you? She is real, too, and lives in a beautiful big house and has a fairy child with golden curls. Oh, I wonder if she would have been glad to have you if you had been all bruised and broken and could never walk——"

"Oh, don't," cried Lilian. Would they have been glad to have her?

"Now, tell me about when you were a little girl and went to the stores to buy things for your mother and played 'Ring around a rosy,' and 'Open the gate as high as the sky.' "

The child's voice and manner had changed like a flash. She liked Lilian's make-believe stories in some moods; then she wanted real

children and their doings, children who wiped dishes and swept floors while their mothers sewed or cared for a little baby in the cradle. And the petty disputes, the spending of a penny in candy and dividing it round.

"They couldn't all have pennies I suppose," the child commented.

"Their mothers were too poor," laughed Lilian, thinking how seldom she had the pleasure of being a spendthrift. And if she were ever so rich what could she do for Claire?

So they talked on and on until Edith came and said a young gentleman had called for Lilian—her brother.

She went through to the parlor. Yes, it was Willard, bright and smiling as if glad to see her.

"But how did you know I was here?" she asked.

"Oh, I was at Mrs. Barrington's, and we had a long talk about you. Then she directed me. It is getting towards night and our beautiful day shows symptons of coming rain."

Yes, it did. She had been so interested in Claire she had not noted the change.

"So I think you had better allow me to escort you home, at least—oh, I wish it were to your real home. Think, what an evening

we would have together, and I've only three days more. I have to start Wednesday evening and report on Thursday. Well, will you give me the pleasure?"

He rose then, and bending over, kissed her.

"I'd like you to meet my friends——"

"Well—for a moment."

Mrs. Trenham and Edith came in.

"Just say a quiet good-bye to Claire," Edith whispered. "She is curiously upset about something."

The slim arms clung to Lilian.

"Oh, will they let you come again? Edith said it would all be different and your new mother would want you, and—and—" the child ended with a sob.

"Of course I shall come again, and again, little sweetheart," kissing her.

"Oh, what a pretty name! I love you."

"And you will soon see me again."

Willard stood with his hat in his hand in a waiting attitude, tall and manly, the fine face marked by a certain pride of birth, of culture, and the inherited grace of generations. The deep, outlooking eyes spoke of strength of character with a vein of tenderness, and the smiling mouth of affability. Yet it struck her that he did not seem to belong to the plain

little parlor and it almost appeared as if he dwarfed the two women, a feeling she could not help resenting inwardly.

They made their adieus in a friendly manner. Yes, the bright day had settled to the threatening of storm. The air was heavy and murky and cut with the promise of coming sleet. Willard drew the girl's hand through his arm and they caught step.

"I am glad you are going to be tall," he said. "You have all the indications, the figure and the air. It runs in mother's line as well as that of the Crawfords."

"I am taller than—than your sister," rather hesitatingly.

"Than *your* sister, as well. Oh, Marguerite, I hope you two will come to love each other dearly. Then there will be Vincent. We two boys have been such chums."

"It is strange to have a new name," she said slowly, yet it was more to her fancy.

"Do you like the old one better?" as if in a little doubt.

"I didn't like it very much, and I remember when I rebelled against Lily. It seemed such a sing-song king of a name. It's sweet and pretty, too, Lilian Boyd gave it more character."

"You were named for Mother, but father did not want them quite alike. Her name was Margaret, and father used to say to her—

'Oh, fair Margaret,
Oh, rare Margaret,
Where got you the name of strength and beauty?' "

Would she be dearer to her father on account of her name?

"And Zaidee?" she said, in a suggestive tone.

"Oh, I believe it was from a story that had been a great favorite with my mother, and it does just suit Zay. She is so light and airy and butterfly-like. Why, she seems about two years younger than you. I'm glad there isn't any puzzle about telling you apart. She's sweet and gay and loving and I suppose we've all spoiled her. Aunt Kate thinks she's the loveliest thing in the world, and she has just devoted her life to the child. Aunt Kate is as good as gold, a stickler for some things and she's always been splendid to mother. But she's great on family. She can't cry *you* down, because you belong to us."

"But I've been on the other side all my life, and—" yes, she would say this— "Mrs. Boyd's health was so broken that if it had not been for Mrs. Barrington's kind offer I must

have given up school and gone into a factory; and began to repay her for her kindly care of me."

She felt the curious sort of shrinking that passed over him.

"But you didn't," he said, decisively. "And if she had let you alone——"

"But she was sure my mother was dead. Oh, nothing can ever make me forget her tender, devoted love. I cannot bear to have her blamed."

"But you must not dispute the matter with father. Let it all go since it has turned out so fortunately. I love you for your courage in standing by her, but there are many things you will learn—beliefs and usages of society. I don't mean simply money. We Crawfords have no vulgarity with a gold veneer; and, my dear girl, you may tell all your life with Mrs. Boyd over to mother, indeed, I think she will want to know it all; but—be careful about Aunt Kate—"

"And I *was* the caretaker's daughter at Mrs. Barrington's. Oh, I have seen some snobbishness among what you call well-born girls. I am not a whit better or finer than I was a month ago, when I expected to work my way up to a good salary and strive earnestly for

everything I had; and Mrs. Barrington would have helped me and been really proud of my success."

"What a spirit you have!"

"I shall never be a snob," she flung out, proudly.

"I do not intend to be one myself. Oh, don't let us dispute these points. We all learn a good deal as we go along life. And, my dear, love us all as truly as you loved your foster mother. Oh, I wonder if you can ever understand your own mother's joy at having you back—"

"Which she owes largely to Mrs. Boyd. Suppose she had died without this—this explanation?"

"Even she understood that you did not belong in her walk of life. She saw the difference and that made her feel she might have deprived you of something better, that she could not give you."

That was true enough. But just now she was Lilian Boyd and angry, though she could not satisfy herself that she had a perfect right to this unreasonableness. So she made no reply.

"Oh, Marguerite, don't be vexed with me. We shall not see each other for a long while,

and I want to carry away with me the knowledge that you are very happy in your new home. You will have so many pleasures, interests; you will be loved; oh, you must be loving, as well. Let the past go as a strange dream."

"It can never be a dream to me," she returned, decisively. "A thing you have lived through is stamped on your brain. I would not, if I could, dismiss it."

"Then I think that other love and care will make as deep an impression on your mind. Good-night, my dear sister, and best wishes for a happy tomorrow."

He kissed her fondly and turned away. She looked after him with a swelling heart.

When the door was opened, she flew up to her room and girl fashion, went straight to the mirror. Generally she had very little color, now her cheeks bloomed like roses and her eyes were brilliant, something more, a light she had never seen in them; and, yes, her scarlet lips were shut, with dimples in the corners. Then she laughed, half in anger, half in a mood she had never known before, it was compounded of so many varieties.

At Laconia, she had known several pretty school girls but they had golden hair and

lovely blue eyes. It was odd, but she had always liked the word cerulean so much. And her eyes were almost black when anything moved her deeply. She had not thought much of beauty applied to herself.

"I am glad we don't look alike," she mused. "I am willing to be plainer, and if I had some great gift—perhaps my voice might be cultivated. But I mean never to be ashamed of that past life. Oh, what would Willard say if he knew I had carried bundles back and forth and done errands for the dressmaker! Well I must keep that part locked in my own heart. Poor mamma Boyd, I'm glad you never understood the difference. I wish I had loved you better."

She bathed her face and took off her cloth dress, putting on one of some light material Mrs. Barrington had given her awhile before. Then she went down stairs just as the summons for dinner sounded. Mrs. Barrington met her in the hall with a smile.

"Did you have a nice day? And did your brother find you?"

"Yes, I enjoyed it very much. And—we walked back together. He leaves on Wednesday night."

"And is very sorry to go. He is so interested

in you. I wish he could remain longer, but he has the true sailor heart."

Lilian felt suddenly ashamed of her anger. Of course the whole family must look at it from that point of view, which was not hers. And having a brother was such a new thing to her. She had not been thrown much with boys. Her books had been her dearest companions.

They all went to the drawing room afterward and had a pleasant talk about the day and its duties. It softened Lilian's heart strangely. After that some almost divine music, it seemed to her, and her thoughts were lifted above distracting reflections.

The girls sang also. Several of them had very good voices but the best singers were away. Lilian was not afraid tonight, but let her voice swell out as she had in church this morning, and it surprised even herself.

When they said good-night to each other Mr. Barrington led her to her own pretty sitting room.

"I have hardly seen you today," she began, "and though your change will not separate us altogether and is so immeasureably to your advantage, I want you to know that I had some plans for your future re-

volving in my mind. I meant to have matters on a different basis when we began the new term. I did not think Mrs. Boyd would live through the winter, and as you know, I promised to care for you. You will make a fine linguist, and that is quite a gift for a woman. Then I have been interested in your voice. You sang with much power and beauty tonight. It is not the ordinary girlish voice."

"Miss Trenham said it was a contralto. I don't know the difference between that and an alto. Of course, I sang in school at Laconia, and took quite a part in the closing exercises. But no one seemed to think—and I couldn't manage it always—" pausing lest she might say too much.

It wants cultivation, and I believe has some fine probabilities. I have spoken to Mr. Reinhart about giving you private lessons in the new term."

"Oh, how good you are! I could almost wish——" and she clasped the hand nearest her.

"No, don't wish anything beyond what has happened. In spite of all the love and tenderness lavished upon Mrs. Crawford, it was a continual regret that she should have taken you on that ill-fated journey. Charming as

Zaidee is, she was always wondering what you would have been like. I think you will not disappoint her. You have been in a trying position for a girl of your ambition and temperament. I think you might have accepted some proffers without much hurt to your pride, but you know now you are on an equality with the best, and though many of these distinctions are much to be regretted, we cannot change the world. The change must be in ourselves, the grace and kindliness that shapes the character to finer and higher issues. But if you had been Mrs. Boyd's daughter, I think there would have been a very promising future before you. I know you would have tried your utmost to succeeed in the two lines I have indicated; and now they will be accomplishments. Mrs. Crawford was a fine linguist and has brightened many an hour with intellectual pursuits. I am more than glad that you will be so companionable, but I cannot give up my interest in you, and I want you to feel that you will be, in part, a daughter to me."

Lilian bent her head down on Mrs. Barrington's shoulder and cried softly, touched to the inmost heart by the affection she had hardly dreamed she had won.

"There are no quite perfect lives even if there is a great deal of love," the lady continued. "We learn to limit out wants and expectations by what others have to give us, and and it is by loving that we learn to live truly, though many shrines get despoiled of ideals as we go along in youth; but as we retrace our steps with years and experience we find God has put something better in them. I want you to come to me with any difficulty that can be confided outside of the family circle. But your mother must be your best friend; and now, dear, good-night."

Lilian returned the kiss, but her heart was too full for words. Tomorrow she would belong somewhere else, have new duties. Oh, could she take them up in the right spirit?

CHAPTER XV

YOUR TRUE HOME

Marguerite Crawford felt that she had been truly changed to some other personality when the carriage stopped under the broad *porte cochere,* and the driver opened the door with a bow for his master. There had been a slight fall of snow in the night that had wrapped every post and every tree in a mantle of jewels, and now the sun came out gorgeously, sending golden rays over the dappled sky of blue and white.

Her father handed her out. Willard ran down the wide steps taking both her hands in his and kissing her fondly. A passion of regret flooded her.

"Oh," in a broken tone. "I was rude and ungenerous to you yesterday. I am sorry—"

"We will let that go, I knew you would regret it. I tried to look at it from your point of view, and I think you couldn't resemble mother so much in looks and not in character."

Her father took her other arm. "Welcome home, my dear daughter," he exclaimed. "All our years together will prove how glad we are to have you."

The hall was like a beautiful larger room, with pictures and statuary and some elegant vases that would have dwarfed a smaller space.

"This is my sister, Miss Crawford — Aunt Kate, to you always; who has been like a mother to my children—"

Aunt Kate bent over from her tallness and gave her a perfunctory kiss. Zay clasped both arms around her.

"Oh, isn't it queer," with a musical ripple. "You certainly were a princess in disguise at school, and some of the girls said you were my double to tease me; but I don't think we look very much alike; do you, papa?"

She raised her radiant face with the pearly complexion, bewitching mouth and shining eyes. Marguerite looked rather pale and cold with the strangeness.

Then they went up to the mother's room, but Aunt Kate paused at the door and turned in another direction. Zay and Willard followed her. Marguerite went to her mother's arms and for many seconds neither spoke.

"What a strange, long waiting without any hope," said the father at length. "I have often thought what Marguerite would be like if she had lived, and it always was impressed upon

me that she would be like her mother. If I could have wished it—"

The child raised her head. The dark lashes were beaded with tears.

"I am sorry not to be as beautiful," she said, with great humility. "I must make up any deficency by my love and devotion. Oh, it seems as if I had gone into some divine country when love filled the very atmosphere."

She held out her hand to her father who crushed it in a tender clasp.

"But you are looking pale and weary, mother." What a sweet word it was to say when it was true.

"I have had a great deal of excitement these last few days, then the nurse had to go away to a more serious case, but I have tried to obey her injunctions," smiling a little. "Probably I shall never be very robust again, but nothing like this will try nerves. I think I have stood it exceedingly well," glancing up at her husband. "I was very quiet all day yesterday, but I could not help dreaming of the years to come——"

"I hope God will give me strength to make them happy. Oh, I want to give you the best of love and service and never pain you by any lack. For you *are* the mother I have longed

for, who could capture and fill my desires. I would like to work for you——"

"My dear, if you could be so devoted to the mother who was not your ideal and could not understand your thoughts and feelings, I shall try to come nearer and fill your whole heart, sympathize with your aspirations. I shall be glad to listen to them. Oh, my child, if you had been dull and coarse, but you simply could not have been, and this Mrs. Boyd must have had a certain refinement. I appreciate her more every day as I think it over."

"Oh, I thank you for that. It seems to me that I must have been willful at times; but I wanted to take her out of that narrow round as well as myself. I felt so certain I could do it after we came to Mrs. Barrington's. She understood my aims."

"You fell into good hands. Oh, how many times we shall talk this over, for I want to know all the incidents of these years we have been apart. When I have lived them with you, I shall feel more truly still that I am your mother. And now are you not a little curious about your new home?"

Mrs. Crawford rose with her arm about the girl, and Marguerite glanced about the room.

It was exquisitely appointed. The second story rooms were ranged about an oval that gave a picturesque aspect. This and the sleeping rooms were toward the east; Mrs. Crawford had a passion for sunrise. On one side was Zay's room, adjoining it Aunt Kate's. Opposite, two guest rooms with bath and closets. It all seemed like some lovely description she had read of in books. Her girl's heart and the refined tastes that had been her birthright seemed to leap for joy. Was she really to live amid all this loveliness!

"We talked of your room on Friday. We couldn't take Zay away from Aunt Kate to put you two together. Willard had this room next to my sitting room, when he came home on vacations; sometimes, both boys; they are very fond of each other. So he proposed his should be yours and had everything taken out and the walls tinted afresh. But we couldn't order new furniture at once, so we brought this from one of the guest chambers. Some day you may choose for yourself. He took out the real boys' pictures except 'Night and Morning' which are great favorites of his and his two bookcases. In one he has left all his poets; at heart, he is a rather romantic fellow. And the other you must fill up to your liking."

"Oh, how could he be so kind to me, when—" and Marguerite swallowed over a great sob.

"He is so glad for me. And he thinks it is truly a gift of Providence that you should come, now that he is going away. Three years! Yet I have waited so many years for these great blessings; prayed for them, if one's ardent wish is a prayer."

"Did you ever pray for me?" asked Marguerite in a low awed tone.

"I prayed that if I died I should find you in that beautiful other country. And sometimes I almost believed I should find you here. Invalids have curious fancies almost like visions. Perhaps God gave me the hope to enable me to endure the suffering and to be comparatively well again and to have you—"

There was the summons to luncheon. The Major came for his wife, Willard met his sister in the hall. The dining room was perfectly appointed, with stands of flowers and ferns that made almost a garden of it. A few blossoms were laid beside each one's plate. The butler seated them noiselessly. Aunt Kate was at the head of the table; she had kept the place so long that Mrs. Crawford would not hear of any change.

She sat at the right of her husband, Marguerite at the left; Jay and Willard were opposite.

Marguerite *was* nervous, but she did just as the others. She felt that Aunt Kate's sharp eyes were upon her. Nearly always, she and her mother had taken their meals together; on Sunday, specially invited to dine with Mrs. Barrington and Miss Arran. Mrs. Boyd shrank from these occasions but the girl seemed guiding her with an almost imperceptible grace.

And although the luncheon came in courses it was not ornate. Marguerite began to feel quite at ease. There was some bright talk, but she did not join that, only now and then answering when her father appealed to her. But every moment she felt more at home.

When they rose Willard took her arm.

"You must examine your new home," he began, laughingly. "If you shouldn't like it—"

"I'd deserve to be banished to Laconia and live in an atmosphere of soot and dust and all manner of noises," she answered, brightly.

"This is the drawing room. In my grandmother's time they used to have famous

gatherings. Uncle Reginald was a great society man, and Aunt Kate quite a belle, but the Madam as she was called, spent her money lavishly. That was in her own right. Much of this furniture came from abroad. But I will do her the justice to say that she did not despise the old Crawford heirlooms that were handsome. Some of them are two centuries old, when people loved to carve and ornament and never compared their time with money. Uncle Reginald was very handsome in his early days and her favorite. Father went to West Point."

The room was certainly full of choice belongings. At the end, a full length portrait of Madame Crawford, painted by a famous French artist during one of her visits to Paris. The satin and velvet of her gown looked real and her laces were magnificently done. She *was* handsome and set them off beautifully. A string of sapphires encircled her throat and from it depended three pendants of diamonds so skilfully done that in certain lights they emitted rays. A handsome woman, truly, but proud and haughty.

"She only wanted one son so that the Crawford estate need not be divided. She was not in favor of large families, while father

would have been glad of at least half a dozen. So you may judge how delighted he is to have you. This is the library. There is a small fortune in the books. Great-grandfather Crawford was an eager collector. Father has been offered big prices for some of the rare editions."

At the farther end of the library there were wide glass doors that opened into a conservatory, where the choicest flowers were kept, and curious ferns. Just beyond was the propagating room and where the tired-out bloomers were put for recuperation.

Marguerite was speechless with admiration. She glanced up with a lovely smile and her dark eyes were lustrous, "Oh," she murmured, with a long sigh, "I never saw anything so lovely! And that I should have come here to live—"

"Our next door neighbors have quite as much beauty, only it is rather more modern. But their conservatory is magnificent. Such a show of orchids is unusual. But Mount Morris is a rather aristocratic place, that is not wholly given over to fashion, but where people have lovely things to enjoy and are not trying to distance each other unless it is in the matter of choice flowers," and he

laughed. "Mother is so fond of them."

She thought she could linger there all the remainder of the day, but presently Willard turned and they retraced their steps. Major Crawford stood in the hall.

"Shall we go for our walk, Willard?" he asked. "I think mother would like Marguerite."

She made a pretty inclination of the head and went up stairs feeling as if she was in fairyland. Mrs. Crawford lay on the lounge with a beautiful Persian wrap thrown over her.

"Will you come and read to me?" she asked in a winsome tone. I want to hear your voice in poetry; Mrs. Barrington said you were a fine reader. I hope you love verse. The dainty little ones are a great pleasure to me, fugitive verses, as they are called. They have soothed many a painful hour."

"Are you very tired?" Marguerite bent over and kissed her.

"No, my dear, only this is part of my German doctor's regimen. He sent a nurse home with me, and last week she went back to assist him with a peculiar case; and I have certain directions to follow, which I obey, implicitly. One is to take a rest after luncheon. Then,

I like to be read to. I am something of a spoiled child, you see."

"I shall be glad to go on with the spoiling," the girl said in a sweet, earnest tone. "I want to do all I can to make you happy—to make up for the years when you did not have me."

Marguerite's eyes were lustrous with deep feeling. Her words went to the mother's heart.

"Let me see—find 'In Memoriam.' How many times in the last few days I have said over to myself:

> " 'If one should bring me this report
> That thou hads't touched the land today,
> And I went down unto the quay,
> And found thee lying in the port,"

Marguerite took the beautifully bound volume in her hand and it gave her a thrill.

"Some poems are adapted to this or that one's voice, like songs. The Major reads Browning and that is saved especially for him. Willard loves Stevenson and Eugene Field's children's verses. Zaidee the light gay caroling things, and those arch, sweet Irish poems. But your voice sounded to me as if you loved Tennyson and Whittier."

"I have not had the opportunity of reading Tennyson very much, but I thought the Christmas verses most beautiful. I hope I shall please you," hesitatingly.

Mrs. Crawford listened attentively. There was a depth and richness in the voice, an impressive, penetrating emotion that betrayed the harmony with the lines. And when she had finished that poem, she said in a low tone:

"Shall I go on?"

"Yes," replied the mother.

It was so beautiful that Marguerite forgot herself in the poet's deep feeling—so human, so comforting—she could have read on until dusk, but Mrs. Crawford turned presently.

"I must not tire you for I shall want you to read to me often. Do you sing?" I suppose you have not begun to play?"

"No, Mrs. Barrington thought I would, in the new term. And she also thought my voice was—" Marguerite paused, afraid of being too presuming.

"Worth cultivating, was not that what she said? It is a contralto that can express profound depths of feeling. I had it years ago and your father was wild over it. He will be delighted. Zay's voice is a light soprano. She plays very well. Yes, you must take up music."

"Oh, mother, it doesn't seem as if so many lovely things should come to me!"

"Why not, when you have been in the desert all these years?"

They clasped each other in a fond embrace. Oh, was it really true that she was a daughter of the house, that she had a right to the love and care? Could she ever give enough to repay?

There was a stir down stairs and some merry voices. Major Crawford rejoined his wife presently.

"The two Chichester girls to see if the children are sure to go to the Van Ordens, though I think their eagerness is most for Will," laughing. "His gay time will soon be over. Zay's as well. Next week school will begin, and Marguerite must come under rules. The chief one is that there is no frolicking until Friday evening, no holiday until Saturday."

"Oh, I wish girls did not have to grow up so fast. Think how soon they will be sixteen," bemoaned the mother.

"I kept another birthday," said Marguerite, "I am glad to go back even the few months."

"You look as if you were beginning to feel at

home," said her father. "Oh, I hope we shall have many, many happy years together."

Marguerite's heart was to full to reply. She looked at him with eyes like her mother's, only they were a little deeper.

Zay came flying up stairs.

"Have I neglected you all the afternoon? We found a bad rent in my pretty frock and Aunt Kate had to change the skirt. Then I wanted to write some letters and the days are so short."

She kissed her mother rapturously; then went and sat on her father's knee.

"And the Chichesters want us to dinner tomorrow and a little dance afterward. It is Will's last nibble at pleasure. Oh, why didn't you make him choose some real business, you naughty father, so he could have stayed at home like a respectable citizen."

"And had a sweetheart. Then what would you have done?"

"Looked up a sweetheart also. Oh, must he go Wednesday night?"

"Think what a nice long holiday he has had!"

"And think of three desolate years!"

"They may be more desolate for us than for him. But it was his choice."

He entered the room just then. Had Marguerite found any special entertainment? What had Zay been doing?

"Oh, writing letters. Marguerite be glad you have not forty dear friends who are crying write, write all the time."

No there was only one person she had written to. That was Sally Weeks at Laconia, and if Sally answered—well, she was lame on spelling, if she had a good generous heart.

Zay and her aunt had done something beside writing and mending the party frock. They had discussed Marguerite.

"Well," Aunt Kate had said with a long and rather unwilling accent, "she might have been worse. Her table manners are passable. I do suppose she has picked up a good deal at Mrs. Barrington's. But she has a rather uncertain air, and we shall have to hunt her up some clothes. I must talk to your mother about it."

"Oh, dear, what a fuss there will be at school; I wish it was all over! I do wonder what Louie Howe will say! We had some talks—well, I could see how some of the girls felt."

"I think that was very natural, I suppose she *was* presuming."

"No, she wasn't," returned Zay with heightened color, "I want to be fair to her for she *is* my sister. I think I'd rather be an only daughter, but father will be just as fond of me, I am sure. I don't know about the boys; but then Vincent won't be home until next summer. I suppose we'll all go to West Point. Of course, I couldn't well have staid with mother this afternoon, so I don't mind her being there—"

Zay you are very generous and unsuspecting. I should be sorry to have any influence undermine your love. You have been all to your mother."

"But I can't be all now, I see that. Still I'll have you, aunt Kate, and I won't give up my place in her heart. Oh, trust me to keep that."

Aunt Kate was anxious for her favorite and though she did not mean to be ungenerous, she could not so cordially rejoice. If the girl had been awkward or underbred, she could have taken her in hand with a good grace. But she was not likely to ask anything of her.

Dinner was a rather more elaborate meal. It did seen odd to wait for some one to help to the smallest thing and she wondered how Mrs. Boyd would feel to have some one

standing at her back and anticipating her wishes before they were hardly formulated. But there was a certain dignity and pleasure in it with no jar or awkwardness. How did she come to take to it naturally? She did not seem to feel embarrassed, and how lovely the room looked with the lights and the still hanging Christmas greens.

When Zaidee came in to wish her mother good-night, she did indeed look like a fairy being. Her frock was some soft, diaphanous stuff over a pale green slip, some of her curls were tied up high on her head and the ribbon and that of her sash matched. Three strings of pearl beads were about her white throat. Marguerite smiled to herself—Miss Nevins would call that very poor party attire.

"Don't stay late, Major Crawford said to his son.

"Oh, we couldn't," declared Zay laughing. "It's a school girls' 'Small and early.' We begin at eight and the musicians depart at ten and we go to refreshments, and by eleven,

"'The lights are fled the music dead,
And all of us departed.'"

"That is just as it should be," declared aunt Kate, "if you wish to keep roses and bright eyes for pleasure later on."

Zay kissed her parents. Marguerite was sitting a little out of range, but Willard bent over and gave her a tender good-night. Then aunt Kate wrapped her niece in a lovely evening cloak trimmed with white fox and drew the hood up carefully, and the carriage soon whisked them to their destination.

"Oh, how beautiful she looks!" Marguerite exclaimed; involuntarily.

The mother smiled tenderly.

"Zaidee has grown up with her beauty," said the father. "I used to be afraid aunt Kate would spoil her and lead her to think beauty was the great thing to strive for, but she takes it as a matter of course. I hope she will be as indifferent about it when she is grown to womanhood, for nothing destroys the charm like that ultraconsciousness and the bid for admiration. So many things beside beauty of feature go to make up the charm of an interesting woman."

She must be interesting, Marguerite thought. There were so many delightful qualities one could cultivate. Mrs. Barrington was charming, and Miss Arran had so many nice quiet ways, that she had insensibly copied; her low toned voice, her never seeming to hurry and yet going about any matter as if it was

the first thing to be done; her little orderly methods. She kept her mother's room neat, she put the books back in their places; there was a cluster of autumn leaves in a vase, or a sprig of spruce or cedar that for a long while would put forth new leaves. She was very glad now that she had taken so much pains. Was she rather unpolished when they had first come from Laconia. But her circle there was so different.

She told over only the best of it when her father asked about her life there. Wasn't this what Willard had meant and she had resented? She would try not to be ashamed of the poor and plain living since it was the best Mrs. Boyd could give; but she knew even then she was longing and planning for something better.

And a room like this for her very own! She liked it better because her very own brother had planned it for her. She looked over some of the books and above his name he had written—"For my Sister Marguerite." And she was glad with a sense of mystery she did not care to fathom that her mother's room was between her and Zaidee's.

What a long day it had been. Yet in a certain sense happy, as happy as any strange beautiful place with a father and mother,—

the latter she had not even dreamed of when she had thought a father might be found. Oh, she must be very grateful to God for sending her here where the tangle could be resolved in such an honorable manner and she must try to be worthy of all the love lavished upon her. The whole world broadened and she was part of the higher life. She was looking up to the hill tops where human endeavors must aspire even though there were failures, and to the west over beyond the land of eternal love and golden fruition.

CHAPTER XVI

OUT OF HER LOYALTY

Mrs. Van Orden's residence was large and handsome and a-light from top to bottom. There were three daughters from seventeen to thirteen. They had always been very friendly with the Crawfords, and this gathering was a good deal in honor of the young midshipman who was so soon to go on his first cruise of three years.

The girls in the dressing room hovered about Zay. Wasn't it wonderful that her sister had been found and living here all these months? Why it was just like a story!"

"A princess in disguise," laughed Zay. "That was what I called her."

"And is she—does she look like you?"

"No, although we are twins you can easily tell us apart. She is taller; I think she will be like mother. Her hair is—well a sort of bronzy light brown, and her eyes are such a dark blue that you might mistake them for black, and she's rather grave; not such a fly-away as I am. Of course, you know, we have

only had her one day though the others went over to Mrs. Barrington's to see her."

"And wasn't she something there," asked a girl.

She was going to study for a teacher. Mrs. Barrington expected to keep her after her—well, I suppose we might call it a foster-mother, died. You see Mrs. Boyd thought the nurse mamma had was her real mother and she felt so sorry for the baby believing the true mother had been killed."

"Why it is a real romance."

Zaidee meant to put it on a right foundation. At school once she had, in a way, stood up for her when Louie Howe tried to establish a distinction. So why shouldn't she now, and always, even if she had not taken Marguerite cordially to her heart. No one outside should offer a slight.

"And you believe it is all true—"

"Well, I think Dr. Kendricks and Mr. Ledwith and Mrs. Barrington couldn't all be deceived. You see, this Mrs. Boyd never knew she belonged to us, but she thought there might be a father somewhere; and the account of the accident tallied; there were only two babies on the train and one was killed. Mrs. Boyd knew the baby she took

was not hers. So it is beyond any doubt."

Zaidee Crawford looked brave and beautiful and her voice would have carried conviction anywhere, as well as disarming criticism.

"Oh, you *are* a darling!" and two or three of the girls kissed her rapturously.

"I wouldn't be without a sister for all the world," declared Evelyn Van Orden, the middle one of the three girls.

The musicians were tuning up. Several of the young gentlemen stood in the hall waiting. Mrs. Van Orden summoned them down.

It was a gay young people's party and numerous were the regrets that Willard Crawford was to be gone for so long.

"But you'll have Vincent all next summer," he said. "And there is no scarcity of other young fellows."

"But they go away, as well. Unless they have a fortune they cannot afford to stay at home."

"And I have all mine to make," he returned, with mock seriousness.

It was true that at ten the music stopped, but there was some gay chatting over the refreshments and then the carriages began to come. They all expressed their pleasure

to their hostess. Willard insisted that they should take home two or three of the girls, and they were nothing loth.

"But, you see, Zay is quite certain she owns him, and she gave him about every other dance," said Sophie Lawrence, as she stood on the steps with her sister.

When they were alone Willard reached over and took his sister's hand in a warm clasp.

"Zay, I heard your fine defense for Marguerite. I was waiting at the head of the stairs. I suppose for awhile there will be some gossip and wondering, but there never can be any doubt of the truth. I think she is going to make a fine and admirable woman, and I hope you two will love each other as Vin and I always have."

"You can't love anyone offhand. Such a love would not be worth having, and if she wins you away from me—"

"Oh, Zay, silly child! No one can take your place in the heart of one of us."

"I'm not sure." Zay was crying then.

"You will be sure in the years to come. For mother's sake let us be a united family. You can never be crowed out. And I think the more love one gives, the more one gets in return."

The Major was waiting for them and gave them a tender good-night.

They were all busy the next day in consultations. A package of clothing came over from Barrington house that Miss Arran had put in order for Marguerite, much of it being gifts from Mrs. Barrington, accompanied with the kindliest and most delicate note. Aunt Kate had fussed a little about the child not having anything fit to wear.

"Mrs. Barrington is right, it is best not to make too great a change, though I think Marguerite's tastes are very simple. Zay, I fancy, has had rather too much, but she is not as vain of her clothes as of her beauty, and she is a dear, sweet child. Aunt Kate, we all owe you so much, and we will see how Marguerite develops."

Miss Crawford was somewhat mollified, but she returned—"Zay must not be crowded out of her mother's heart."

"Oh, there is no fear of that. If we had the six we planned for I think none of them would complain. Mother love is elastic.

Willard and Zay were much engrossed making farewell calls. He was very bright and hopeful, picturing the points of interest he should see and the experience he should gain.

And there would be letters. Three years would pass rapidly. He stipulated that the girls should not be married until his return.

"We have had such a nice long vacation with you," said his mother, "and we must comfort ourselves with that; and I may come over to some port with the girls if you are to stay long enough. I feel as if I was just beginning to live a new life. Think, there have been times when I hardly expected to see one of you again. Now I am full of hope."

"My blessed mother!"

He would write when he reached Washington and tell them what the plans were. If they were not quite ready Zay and his father might come on for a few days' visit.

Zay kissed her mother and went to her room where she gave way to a violent fit of weeping.

"I ought to go to your mother," said Aunt Kate. Major Crawford had gone to the station with his son.

"Oh, no, stay with me, she will have Marguerite. Oh, if Willard never never should come back! So many accidents happen," she sobbed.

"Don't let us think of that; so many come home safely. Oh, my child, try to be a little

tranquil. He is here in the country yet and will not go away for several days. Summon your fortitude for the sake of the others."

"No one loves him as I do," she moaned. "I love him dearly. You children have been like my own, I have had so much of the care of you."

"But I love him so dearly, and if he should get weaned away! Why, I should be heart-broken!"

"My dear!" Aunt Kate sat on the side of the bed, bathed her head with fragrant water and comforted her with endearing terms until she grew tranquil and finally fell asleep.

Mrs. Crawford had seated herself on the couch and motioned Marguerite beside her.

"My dear daughter," she said, steadying her voice, "heaven only knows how glad I am to have you and we must comfort one another. I had dreaded Willard going, but God has been good to me and sent you just when I needed you most. We shall be very happy in each other's society, I foresee. You will be my girl as Zay is Aunt Kate's. Willard is so interested in you, and when it is a little pleasanter we will go driving together. I like the byways and the nooks and the wild flowers. Oh, do you think you could learn to

ride? You would not be afraid! Father is so fond of it. Oh, the rides we used to have in our early life!"

Marguerite's eyes lighted with eager pleasure. "Oh, I should like it," she returned, earnestly.

"And he is so fond of it. It seems as if he had given up so many things for me. I used to go out to the Stations with him and live in the Forts. What magnificent gallops we have had. I don't wonder the boys were imbued with the love of military life, their father was such an ardent soldier. We were very happy with our boys but we *did* want a daughter. I was so proud of the twins, perhaps too proud. Yet I do not think we can love these choice gifts of God too much, so long as we are grateful to the giver. Then there came all the sorrowful years. For a long while they thought I never would walk again. The Major resigned from the army and I know it was a sore cross to him. But we took much pleasure in educating our boys, and Zay was such a bright, winsome little thing. Her passion is dancing and being merry. She loves to go out driving but I think she is afraid of managing a horse. Her father tried to train her a little but she cried and begged off,

and the boys have been away so much. Oh, it will give him the greatest pleasure."

"And I want to devote my life to your happiness to make up for the years when you did not have me. You must train me in your ways, you must tell me what he likes best."

"Oh, my darling!"

Major Crawford found them in a close embrace when he returned.

"Oh," the wife began, eagerly, "we have been planning some pleasures so we shall not feel Willard's loss too keenly. You must teach Marguerite to ride and to play chess and we will read the old poets. Some of them are so charming. Why it will seem as if we had gone in an enchanted country—the Forest of Arden."

How bright and smiling she was! He kissed her and then sat down on the other side of Marguerite. He had been afraid he would find her in sore need of comfort.

Aunt Kate came in presently.

"Zaidee has fallen asleep," she said. "She was completely unnerved by the parting. Her feelings are so strong, her love has such depths to it, so I have been soothing her to comparative tranquility. You will not miss this one good-night."

"We shall all miss the boy very much, and he will return to us a man of full stature. I think we can trust him to return as true and honorable as when he went away. Yes, he and Zaidee have been together a great deal this last six months and she will miss him sorely."

"But there will be school and new interests," said the mother. "We must see Mrs. Barrington and make some future arrangements. Why in May the girls will be sixteen!"

"Sixteen!" re-echoed their father. "Let us have them set back."

"Oh no," cried Marguerite, "rather let us stay just here. I should like to make two days of every one. I am afraid no day will be long enough."

Miss Crawford turned away. The others resumed their talk and she heard their joyous voices. Poor Zay! Poor Willard!" she said, under her breath.

When she went to her room and it was quite late the gas was lighted, her bed been put in the most inviting order and there lay a pretty nightdress with its garniture. She colored with a thrill of pleasure. Then she turned and surveyed herself in the glass. Her eyes had a luminous softness, there was

a faint pink in her cheeks and her lips had lost their compression, were absolutely shaped into a smile. If she *could* grow prettier! But her parents loved her. She knew that and it filled her with joy.

Zaidee was bright as usual the next morning and hovered about her father in a tender manner. "By this time Willard was in Washington. When would he know his time of sailing?"

"I believe the vessel is at Fortress Monroe; we will hear soon."

"Aunt Kate we ought to make some calls today and Margie Putnam has a tea this afternoon, just an informal little affair. Her cousin has come from Providence, I believe, and will try to get in at Mrs. Barrington's. I should think there would be lovely schools in Providence."

"I want to go over to Mrs. Barrington's this morning," said Mrs. Crawford, "about ten; will you order the carriage?" to her husband.

Then she asked the maid to unpack a box that they had brought home on their last journey. There were many beautiful materials. They did seem extravagant at the time, but she was rather glad now.

"Marguerite, I wonder if you could wear these things. This green is lovely." It was a cloth that had the sheen of satin. She held it up to the young girl. Why, yes—it would make a handsome winter suit trimmed with fur. And this sort of lavender gray—it is a favorite color of mine. "We will see the dressmaker this morning."

Marguerite flushed and glancing up smiled gratefully, though she could not trust her voice to speak.

"Oh, it will be delightful for me to have a young girl to dress—a daughter. Perhaps, I shall be a foolish mother, but Aunt Kate has always looked after Zay's attire. I believe I was not much interested in clothes, but now I shall be and I have so many pretty things I shall never wear again. Zay is overburdened now," laughing softly, "and Aunt Kate will dower her. Oh, Marguerite, I am so glad to have you! It has given a new impetus to my life," and she held the girl to her heart.

It was a bright morning, cold, but with no perceptible wind. The trees were outlined against the blue sky, where there was scarcely a drift of white floating about. The evergreen about the lawns made it look less like winter and here and there a conservatory

showed brilliant bloom. How beautiful the town was even in the winter.

There were two streets given over to business in one of which a trolley line was allowed, largely for the convenience of the outlying settlements. There really were some very nice stores. There was a fine music hall used for lectures and now and then a play found its way thither. Some seven miles distant was a thriving city.

The carriage paused at a fine residence with just a nameplate on the door. They were ushered into a handsome parlor and in a few moments Madam came sweeping down the broad stairway, her silken gown making a soft swish on the polished floor. She was surprised and delighted to see Mrs. Crawford, who introduced her daughter and soon stated her errand. The green was to be a walking suit for Miss Marguerite and trimmed with whatever fur would be considered most appropriate. The lavender would be a sort of dinner and general-utility dress and ornamented with some beautiful Persian embroidery that had been brought from abroad; one of Aunt Kate's bargains.

When it was all settled the forewoman was called, who ushered Marguerite upstairs into

the fitting room where two tall mirrors gave the place twice the size. There were measurements and discussions but the fitter was horrified to learn that the young girl had never worn corsets.

"Still she has a fine figure. You will make a larger woman than your sister, indeed, you *do* favor your mother. It is like a miracle to see Mrs. Crawford going about without any aid. She had such a splendid physique until that horrible accident. How overjoyed they must feel that you escaped."

Marguerite quietly admitted that and presently she was returned to her mother.

"We might have sent for them, but I thought you wouldn't mind, and I should have had to explain it all to Aunt Kate. Why, I feel as if I had run away on some secret expedition. Do I look guilty?" and she laughed softly. "You are to be my girl you know. Oh, I hope you wont think me exigent? I can't endure fussiness, and I do believe that I have given in to Zay's desires when I did not think them wise or necessary, rather than have any discussion. But Aunt Kate loves her so and she has been so good to me."

Mrs. Barrington was delighted to see them. While the two ladies discussed studies and

future plans, Marguerite ran through to the study where the left-over scholars were arranging a little play they were to amuse themselves with that afternoon. But Miss Nevins uttered a shriek of delight and nearly toppled her over in an exuberant embrace.

"Oh, my dear Miss Boyd—Crawford, I mean, will we get used to the new name! Isn't it all splendid! And to be so rich and to belong to a first class family! It *does* make a difference. I've been writing to mamma all about it. It ought to be put in a book. But I liked you so from the very first, and you were so good to me. But the girls kept hectoring me and saying mamma wouldn't approve. She's very particular about the friends I make, because I shall go in the best society when I get introduced. I think papa will give me a ball. It is real stylish to have it at Sherry's. And I want you and your sister; only you ought to look more alike, being twins; I'm just as glad as if something grand had happened to me. And your father ought to give you a splendid party at Crawford House. I suppose it is very fine and all that."

Her face was in a glow and her dull brown eyes had a glint in them that improved them very much.

"I am just the same as when I was Lilian Boyd," she began. But Alice interrupted—"Oh, no, you're not, and you will soon find it out. It's all right, too. Rich people *do* have more chances, and seeing the world and mixing with high up style gives you an air. Why you couldn't imagine that plain little Mrs. Boyd with her meek air going to dinners and balls, and she never could have earned money enough to dress any. That's what tells. And when you can't go into society or meet nice people but just stay at home and work or teach—what fun is there in life? Why I'd rather be dead."

"I should want to be alive even if I were Lilian Boyd. I think it is a grand world, and there is so much happening all the time. And I don't care so much about being rich—"

"But you *will* and your mother is so lovely. Major Crawford looks rather stern and that handsome young man—what a pity he's to follow the sea, unless he gets to be an Admiral, and then he'll have to be quite old. I'd rather be at West Point. Oh, I wish I had a brother."

Marguerite looked pityingly at the silly girl. Then she asked about the play. Miss Nevins had been to the theatre and wanted

to remodel the simple little story, and there had been some warm arguments.

"I must go and see Miss Arran." There was no use disputing proprieties with the overwise girl. But she hoped they had all begun a Happy New Year.

Alice followed her into the hall. "You are coming back to school and now we can be real good friends. Oh, I just love you and I'm so glad all this happened to you." Before Marguerite could evade it she had given her a rapturous kiss which the girl rubbed off an instant later.

Miss Arran was truly glad to see her and they exchanged warm wishes.

"We have a new caretaker, quite a young woman, but I do not take a real fancy to her. Your mother, oh, excuse me saying that—was so neat and particular and did every thing so well."

Marguerite smiled. She had often added touches of order and neatness, and kept the room tidy with a taste that never appealed to Mrs. Boyd. Though, perhaps, it had in her earlier years. The young girl could understand now, how gradually she had failed.

And there was Mrs. Dane with her cordial grasp and the heartiness of her greeting.

Whatever distrust she might have had had vanished.

"We are so glad to have you back again," she exclaimed, and such a bright future opening before you, though I must have given you the same respect if you had been here teaching. Mrs. Barrington doesn't often take such a fancy to anyone. She did from the very first, and though you'll find the money and position will make a difference in some quarters, it never would have with her."

"Oh, I am sure of that," responded the girl earnestly.

The two ladies had settled about the studies and the music and Mrs. Barrington explained a little plan. All the girls would be in by Saturday and she thought it would be well to introduce Marguerite in her new circumstances. She would, therefore, give a little dinner at which the sisters should be the guests of honor. That would prevent any gossip or comment and give Marguerite that home feeling with the other students. Mrs. Crawford assented cordially.

"And now, we must go or we will be late for lunch. I can never thank you enough for your kindly interest in my dear girl when she came to you an unknown stranger and if

anything should happen to me, for I have wondered if one could be so happy and enjoy it for long, I should want you always to be her friend."

"You may depend upon that, but the good days are only the outgrowth of patiently borne bad ones; beauty for ashes."

Mrs. Crawford was very bright at luncheon. She announced to Zaidee Mrs. Barrington's plan for the informal dinner.

"Why, I think it excellent," declared Zaidee. "You see, we should both be questioned. It's awfully tiresome to have to tell an occurrence over and over and Mrs. Barington would carry conviction. I hope you won't mind, Marguerite. See what it is to be a heroine."

"I was nearly killed with Miss Nevins and wouldn't it be a good thing to refer curious people to Mrs. Barrington?"

Marguerite glanced up with a half smile.

"We have to pay the penalty for any unusual happenings," said their father. "I think I should feel interested if this had occurred in the home of a neighbor. So we will not set it down to idle curiosity. Even *I* had to be convinced that it was not mere hearsay."

As they were leaving the room Miss Craw-

ford said in a low tone, "Margaret—don't you need some shopping or planning done?"

"Thank you, Kate. You have been a true sister all these years. I took Marguerite and some material to Madame Blauvelt this morning. She thought that green cloth would make a very becoming suit and the lavender grey. They will not go out much this winter now that the holidays are over, and they are too young."

Miss Crawford only said, "Oh, very well."

The mother had a half guilty feeling as if she had unduly asserted herself, yet she was inexpressibly happy.

There were calls in the afternoon and Zaidee sat alone in her room leaning her chin on her hand and glancing out of the window.

In a way she had been the family heroine.

The twin sister who might have been so dear had been wrenched out of her life. She had thought of her, dreamed of her, although she had been well content to fill the place of an only daughter with this faint shadow of sorrow hanging over her; and suddenly, she had been uprooted, flung aside as it were, and another had stepped into her place. She did not like it. If it had been from the beginning! If it had come about some other

way. If someone had sent from that Western town. Would the girls who had held themselves above the Boyd connection feel mortified at many of the comments they had made? She was glad she had held up some supposititious cases; though, truth to tell, Zaidee felt too secure of her own standing to need any propping, and there was a strand of independence in her character, but she had been first all her life and in a curious fashion she would lose that eminence.

Of course, in time she would love Marguerite. One could not do it in a moment. That was the salve she was applying to her conscience. When they had known each other for months, learned and respected each others' peculiarities, love would come. She had not felt inclined to fling herself in Lilian Boyd's arms, and she had almost doubted at first. So had Aunt Kate.

Zaidee would have scouted the thought of jealousy, and if it had been suggested would have denied it vehemently. Neither was she given to analysis. Her temperament was rather volatile and pleasure loving. The things that suited her she enjoyed, the others she passed by indifferently. She did like to be made much of, and she thought she was

worthy of preference. She had beauty, good nature and a heedless sort of generosity and wealth. In a certain way she saw the benefit of that quite as much as Alice Nevins though she did not esteem it the chief good.

Major Crawford came in from his walk just at dusk.

"Letters!" holding it up. "A thick packet —one for each of us, I think."

Zaidee had been waiting for Aunt Kate to come up stairs, as the last caller had gone. She was lonely after this long communing with herself.

If there is not one for me I shall go to bed and cry," she declared as she followed to her mother's room. Aunt Kate had been detailing some of the pleasant neighborhood news.

"Yes—each one was directed. Willard had not omitted one member of the household. He was in Washington and had come just in time for some of the grand occasions. Saturday he was to board his vessel and by Wednesday, at the farthest, they were to start on their three years' pilgrimage. But to each one some tenderness exclusively for herself. To Zay he recalled many of their joys during the summer time, little events they were glad to hold together and the blessed news of their mother.

"There will never be anything quite like that," she thought to herself. "And there is no one else—Aunt Kate never felt afraid to trust us, and of course, he will grow older, find a sweetheart perhaps, and I may have a lover; girls of nineteen do. Up to this time he has cared the most for me.

Marguerite turned to the window though the gas had been lighted. There was no past to refer to, only the sweet, tender hopes of the future. It touched her deeply. No one had ever written her such a letter before. And that he was her brother and would write again and again. She must strive to deserve this love and confidence, grow up into the fine character he had pictured for her. Vincent had sent her fond messages in his mother's letter but she did not know him and he could not come so near.

Zay read some of hers aloud, but she wondered a little what he could find to say so much of to Marguerite. She had not the courage to show it to her mother, even, it seemed so sacred to her. Oh, could she reach the heights he had indicated?

Marguerite did shrink from the ordeal of Saturday evening. She had kept rigorously to the position of Mrs. Boyd's daughter but

how would she meet these girls who had held aloof in her poverty and proffered cordiality now, because she was Major Crawford's daughter! She could not get over a little hurt feeling, for surely she was the same person. She almost despised the money and the position. But there was the grand and tender love. Ah, that was worth a great deal.

By Saturday noon all the girls had come in. There were merry greetings, recapitulations of the holiday times and the gifts they had received and some of them heard for the first time the change in Lilian Boyd's life.

"I always liked her," said Isabel Gordon, "only you couldn't get on with her. She allowed you to come so far and no farther. And she was a most excellent student and very ready to help anyone. I don't think you girls need ever felt afraid of her presuming and now I suppose you will all go down to her."

Miss Gordon's voice had a touch of indignation.

"I shall pay her the respect due her standing, of course," said another, "I was always polite to her in the classes.

"And, Louie Howe, you know you persuaded that Nevins' girl to write that hateful

letter to her, when she had been so good and taken so much pains with her."

"I didn't *persuade*," rejoined Louie, angrily.

"You said you were sure Mrs. Nevins wouldn't approve of the friendship—yes I think you *did* suggest the letter and Miss Nevins slipped back woefully. How many of us would have taken her into grace again? And I know Mrs. Barrington held Miss Boyd in high esteem."

"She thought she would make a fine teacher; so, of course, she pushed her along."

"Oh, Louie!" in deprecating tones.

"Well, you may all go down to her. I shan't object. She can't hold a candle to Zaidee."

"Oh, Zay is a darling!"

"I wonder how she takes it. She has always been a little Queen and her aunt thinks the sun rises and sets in her and sweeps the very stars out of sight; and Zay isn't a bit puffed up or arrogant, but she *does* want people to love and admire her. And now that her mother has recovered sufficiently to go into society again I am afraid Zay won't like to share her."

"Miss Marguerite isn't handsome and Zay is a beauty, and the least vain of any pretty girl that I ever met."

"It's funny for twins not to look more alike, but there's something noble about her, and she has the same lovely complexion. What she needs is more color."

The carriage drove around; Mrs. Barrington welcomed them both warmly. Marguerite was in a light evening dress that made her look much younger and her hair had been becomingly arranged by the maid. All the girls were summoned to the drawing room and Mrs. Barrington entered with her most delightful air.

"Young ladies," she began, "I have a new scholar to introduce to your circle, Miss Marguerite Crawford, the lost child of Major and Mrs. Crawford, supposed to have been killed in the sad accident fifteen years ago. Mrs. Boyd's baby was killed and she, mistaking the nurse who was killed for the mother, out of pity, took the child. Her health was not very good when she came here and it failed gradually. Then she thought she ought to take some steps that the child might be able to trace her relatives, if she had any. You may have all heard the story, which has been proved beyond a doubt, and she has found the most cordial welcome in her own family. I hope you will all rejoice with her, though I

had resolved if no claimant were found, to keep her here as my own. I hope you will unite with me in giving her the warmest of welcomes in your circle as ambitious students. I thought you might like to meet her in her new relation to us before the real work of next week began."

There was a moment's silence, then Miss Gordon stepped forward and clasped her hand.

"I think we all rejoice in your good fortune; also, that we are not to lose you. It is a beautiful and happy romance and Mrs. Barrington's plans for you would have been fully deserved if something so much more delightful had not happened. Believe me, I shall always be glad to have known you."

There was an instant confusion of voices and a throng gathering about her. Zaidee stood beside her looking proud and happy as congratulations poured in upon her. The cordial acceptance did touch her. She was glad to begin her new life by being friendly with them all.

Presently they went out to the dining room and it was quite a festive occasion. Zaidee was bright and charming, and endeared herself more than ever to the girls. No one should say she had a grudging thought. Phil-

lipa Rosewald proposed drinking toasts to her, even if it was only in water, and much girlish wit and laughter went round.

"Why it's been a delightful party," several of them declared. "Mrs. Barrington, how can we thank you?"

"By being cordial and helpful with each other and holding fast to the divine truths that shape character and will make you admirable women capable of filling the best and highest positions in life; and, remember, there is nothing more satisfactory in the world than true and generous friendship."

Phillipa rescued Zay from the overwhelming kissing and hugs.

"Oh, my dear, isn't it all wonderful? Why you didn't write half of it to me! And I laughed over your little scare of scarlet fever. Louie had a mental attack, I think. She went almost crazy, but I fancy she won't blow on us. It was a silly thing to do, but see here—" and she twisted a ring around her finger. A diamond, sure enough, but I can't be engaged until I've graduated. It's just awful, and only a little stolen bit in his sister's letters to me. But he thinks he'll plan a way to see me at Easter, even if he has to come here. So the old woman didn't miss it there! And

I do wonder how you'll like a sister? You spoiled little midget!"

"Oh, we shan't quarrel," with a gay laugh.

The carriage had come for them and there were enough farewells to send them off to Europe.

"Zay *does* take it beautifully," said a group of girls, "lucky that Miss Nevins was all bunged up with a bad toothache and swelled face. She'd counted so much on being in at the feast."

The three elders were sitting up for them.

"We've just had a gay old time and Rita was the star of the goodly company," exclaimed Zaidee in her merriest tone. "We drank healths enough to sink a ship and Mrs. Barrington was sweetness itself. I'm tired and sleepy, so you won't mind if I run off to bed. And Monday the treadmill of school begins. Only one day of grace!"

She kissed her parents, then her sister. Was she beginning to love her? She had been so radiantly sweet tonight.

"You *did* enjoy it?" and the Major pulled Marguerite down on his knee.

"Oh, yes, only I didn't like being quite so much of a heroine. But my most ardent admirer was ill in bed, and I was thankful for that."

He laughed. How different she was from Zay. Had it been her quiet restricted sphere, her struggle with the life she had known in dreams and the bald every day experiences? Zay laughed at the favors and pleasures showered upon her but she would not have been the bright, merry girl without them. Would the gravity of the one help to tone down the mercurial temperament of the other? Oh, it was so good to have them both! Could he ever be thankful enough? And he forgave the poor woman in her grave.

Zaidee chatted awhile with Aunt Kate who fancied she understood all the thoughts of the young girl's heart. It was not strange she should be a little jealous, but she had more gifts to attract the world with, and the pendulum of her parents' love would swing back presently. Then the child said good-night and went to her white bed, but the sleepiness had gone by and she was wondering about herself.

Would she come to love this strange sister who had been thrust upon her as it were. Truly, she did not know. If she kept the old love of them all, the first love, no one could quite climb up to that place in their hearts and if Marguerite could be content

with the second place—that really was hers, she would be sweet and gracious and share honors with her.

Poor child! She did not understand what love really meant; that it was to dole out the overplus of one's life when one was in the mood, or withhold when one chose, was, as yet, her definition of it. What can an over-indulged child know of the grand motives it takes a life-time to learn?

Marguerite looked out on the shining night with its tender hush, with no wind stirring, no sound anywhere. A new life unrolled before her; an illumination and comprehension of the past that would be builded in the years to come. Whatsoever was lovely and of good report was to be the foundation stones of the temple God had bidden her to rear. Would she learn to be lovely in feature and expression from the inward light of the soul—the lamp God had set there?

Yet the new life had brought grander duties than mere self advancement, and Marguerite prayed that she might fulfill them faithfully.

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